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LUSCIOUS
CARROT CAKE
PAGE 55

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ART OF
MEXICAN
POPSICLES
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THE GREECE ISSUE

25 terrific summer recipes, from stuffed peppers and spinach pie to rosemary chicken and pork souvlaki. Plus great Greek wines, and more

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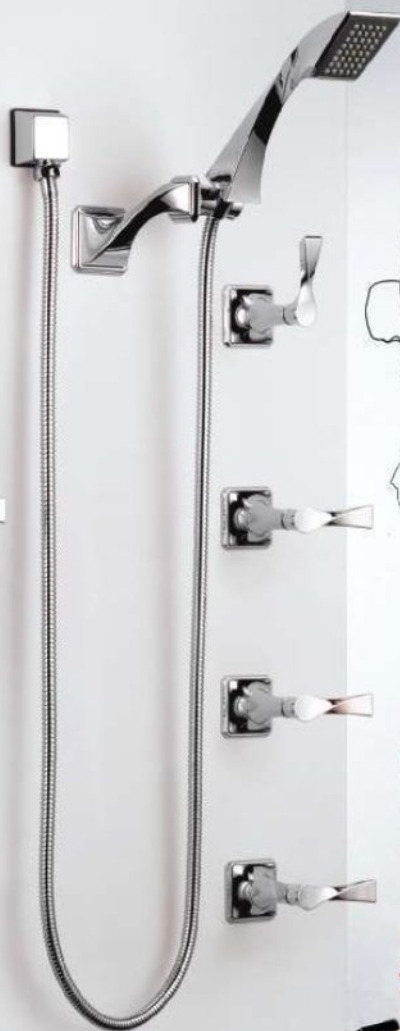
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SPECIAL ISSUE

GLORIES OF GREECE

AT ONCE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND ELEGANT, Greek cooking is a divine marriage of bracing flavors with elemental ingredients like wild greens and herbs, olive oil, fresh fish, tender lamb, and honey. Turn to page 59 to join us on a journey to this country, where everyday food profoundly connects people with the land, with the past, and with each other.

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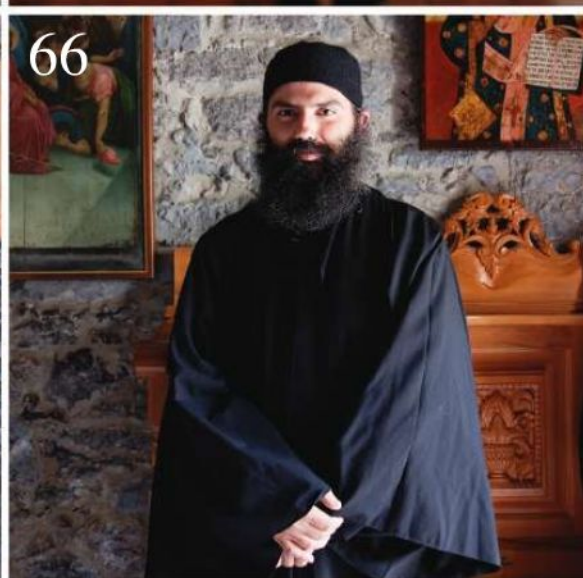
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Cover *Peppers stuffed with feta*. PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD COLEMAN

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PHOTOGRAPH BY NIKOS ECONOMOPOULOS



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A guide to traveling and eating in Greece at SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE131

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A RECIPE FROM MY FAMILY TO YOURS

"We're lucky that we get to enjoy nature everyday on our cattle ranch. We can ride our horses, have a picnic and watch the sun set. Riding horses is one of my favorite things that we get to do. It gives me a sense of peace and I just really enjoy that. My three-year-old also has many highlights in her day. She can climb and roll, build pretend houses and forts. She's just in a world of her own out here and she loves it."

If you are looking for a new beef recipe, try the 'Filet with Horseradish Cream' – my family enjoys it and I have a lot of fun preparing it."



Nancy Madaris (middle) and family, CK Cattle Ranch, Hope Hull, Alabama.

FILET WITH HORSERADISH CREAM

TOTAL RECIPE TIME:
25 TO 30 MINUTES

- 4 beef tenderloin steaks, cut 1 inch thick (about 4 ounces each)
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- ½ teaspoon cracked black pepper
- Salt

HORSERADISH CREAM:

- ¾ cup dairy sour cream
- 1 tablespoon prepared horseradish
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped green onion

DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine garlic, thyme and pepper; press evenly onto beef steaks.
2. Place steaks on grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill, uncovered, 13 to 15 minutes (over medium heat on preheated gas grill, covered, 11 to 15 minutes) for medium rare (145°F) to medium (160°F) doneness, turning occasionally.
3. Meanwhile, combine Horseradish Cream ingredients in small bowl; refrigerate until ready to use. Season steaks with salt, as desired. Serve with Horseradish Cream.

Makes 4 servings.

Nutrition information per serving, 207 calories; 10 g fat (4 g saturated fat; 3 g monounsaturated fat); 77 mg cholesterol; 71 mg sodium; 2 g carbohydrate; 0.4 g fiber; 25 g protein; 7.3 mg niacin; 0.6 mg vitamin B6; 1.4 mcg vitamin B12; 1.8 mg iron; 30.0 mcg selenium; 4.6 mg zinc.

This recipe is an excellent source of protein, niacin, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, selenium and zinc; and a good source of iron.

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FIRST

Fantastic Journeys

The pleasures of traveling in Greece

UP UNTIL A FEW MONTHS ago, I'd never been to Greece—not literally, anyway. One of my oldest friends, Marino Pascal, is from Athens, and I've always been transported by the Greek dishes and wines he puts on the table when I come by. Back in the 1980s, after Marino's son was born, I remember his mother visiting and cooking up a storm. She made some of the most delicious food I'd ever tasted: earthy phyllo pies, hearty stews, an amazing variety of vegetable dishes. I'd been eating Greek salads at local diners for years, but her version, with its scattering of dried oregano and torrent of bright green olive oil, was a serious revelation.

When we started toying with the idea of devoting an issue to the food of a single country, Greece leaped out as an obvious choice. Americans have a preternatural affinity for Mediterranean food, but for most of us, Greek cooking remains something of a mystery. Sure, we know the greatest hits—moussaka, spanakopita—but we tend not to know the country's foodways as deeply as we do those of France,

Italy, Spain, or the Levant.

Eventually, we decided that the best way to tell the story of real Greek food was to experience it for ourselves. Over the course of a month or so, a number of SAVEUR's editors headed to Greece. Test kitchen director Hunter Lewis visited cookbook author Aglaia Kremezi and her husband, Costas Moraitis, at their home on the island of Kea to learn the Greek way with fish. Senior editor Betsy Andrews accompanied SAVEUR intern Maria Xerakia to feast with her family in the Peloponnese. Deputy editor Beth Kracklauer explored the eclectic city of Thessaloniki.

And I went to Epirus, a mountainous region in western Greece that's known for its spare cooking. The week I spent there, eating my way from taverna to street stall and accepting offers for home-cooked meals, was one of the happiest of my life. At every turn, I encountered pure and delicious food made by extraordinarily talented and generous cooks. I came home with a fresh understanding of Greece that makes me cherish those terrific meals at Marino's house all the more. —JAMES OSELAND, *Editor-in-Chief*



SAVEUR's test kitchen director, Hunter Lewis (right), with Costas Moraitis at his home on Kea.



TUSCAN COUNTRYSIDE



Some fall in love with Tuscan
Cuisine as soon as they arrive.

Others love it so much they never leave.

Aldo has lived on a hill overlooking Siena his entire life. Part of an ancient form of sharecropping called *Mezzadria*, he works the olive groves in exchange for a portion of the farm's produce. And while most everything in Aldo's kitchen comes from the land, there's one thing that comes from the market — Barilla pasta.

www.DiscoverBarilla.com

Barilla Penne
with spinach, cherry tomatoes
and Tuscan Pecorino cheese

Ingredients

Barilla Penne	1 box
Extra virgin olive oil	4 tbsp, divided
Garlic	1 clove, chopped
Cherry tomatoes	4 cups, halved
Fresh baby spinach	1 (6 oz.) bag
Tuscan Pecorino cheese	1 cup, shaved
Salt & black pepper	to taste

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FARE

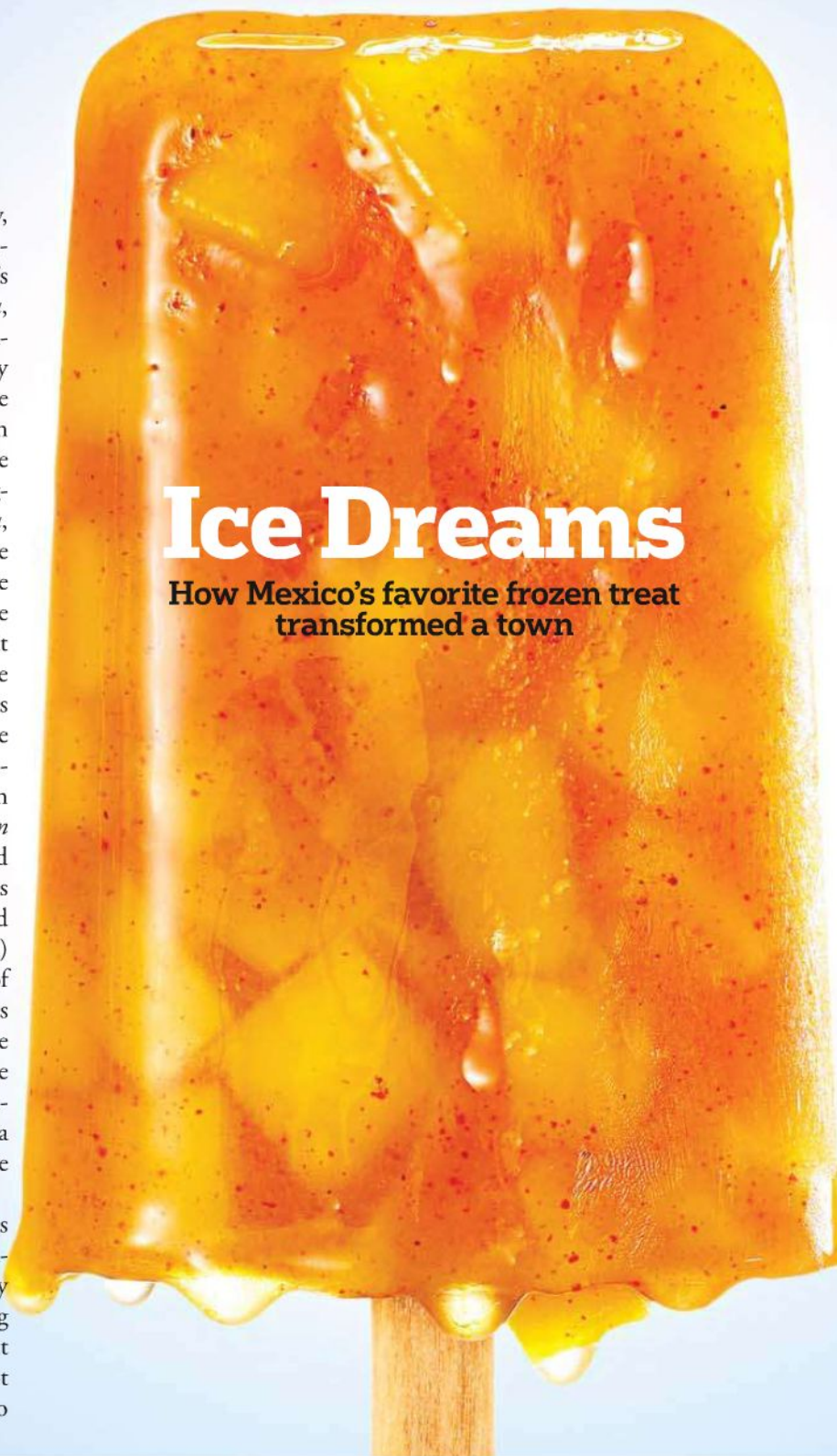
Goodness and Gadgets from the World of Food, plus Agenda and More

I GREW UP in Mexico City, not far from what is considered by many to be the city's very first, and best, *paletería*, or ice-pop store. La Michoacana was founded in 1941 by Agustín Andrade, who came from the town of Tocuambo, in the southwestern Mexican state of Michoacán. The store's signature frozen treat, the *paleta*, was already eaten in places like Tocuambo, where it was made with local ingredients from the farms surrounding the town; it has since been a reliable source of pleasure for three generations of Mexicans. I know that I owe much of my childhood happiness to *paletas*. I was raised on lime, tamarind, and *arroz con leche* (rice pudding) *paletas*, and my first tastes of tropical fruits like *guanábana* (soursop) and *negro zapote* (black persimmon) came frozen on a stick. One of my fondest teenage memories is of walking along a street on the outskirts of Mexico City, one hand intertwined with my girlfriend's and the other clutching a mango-chile *paleta* (like the one pictured at right).

Paletas, whose name comes from *palo*, or stick, were virtually unknown in Mexico City when Andrade started selling them at La Michoacana, but the treats caught on fast. Not long after, his cousin Ignacio

Ice Dreams

How Mexico's favorite frozen treat transformed a town



You can find *paletas* at shops in many areas of the U.S. Our favorites come from a shop called Sley, in Brooklyn, New York. Its flavors (pictured, clockwise from left) include mango-chile, tamarind, *arroz con leche*, strawberry-cream, lime, cookies-and-cream, blueberry, pineapple, and kiwi.





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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We should look for someone to eat and drink with before looking for something to eat and drink. —EPICURUS, 4TH CENTURY B.C.



Alcázar followed from Tocombo and opened another shop. The men soon expanded their operations, calling in relatives and friends for help. More people from Tocombo learned the trade—which entails blending ice or milk with sugar and fruit, chocolate, or other flavorings and then pouring the mixture into rectangular molds for freezing—and headed to Mexico City to open shops of their own. Expert *paleteros* took on apprentices, and shop owners helped their children open stores. In a matter of years, this chain reaction had created a full-fledged industry, dominated by people from Tocombo.

Today, the economy of the once impoverished agricultural town, which now boasts a lovely park and a modern church, is deeply indebted to the *paleta*. What Tocombo doesn't have is many residents—unless you visit in December, when most of the 9,820 native Tocumbans come home for the holidays from their *paleterías* in other parts of the country. There are now more than 15,000 offshoots across Mexico and the U.S., selling hundreds of flavors of *paleta*, including regional favorites such as the apricot-like mamey, favored in the south, or Oaxaca's *tuna con leche quemada* (cactus fruit with caramel). Back in Tocombo, an enormous statue of a *paleta*, with a globe spinning in the bite-shaped gap carved out of the ice pop, graces the entrance to town. —Mauricio Velázquez de León

PALETAS DE MANGO CON CHILE

(Mango-Chile Ice Pops)

MAKES 8 ICE POPS

Mango-chile, pictured on page 19, is one of hundreds of flavors of *paleta* you can find in Mexico. Go to SAVEUR.COM/ISSUE131 to find recipes for others, including *arroz con leche*, tamarind-chile, and strawberry-cream.

- 1 cup store-bought mango juice or nectar (see page 119)
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. ancho chile powder
- 1 large mango, peeled, seeded, and cut into small cubes

Heat mango juice, sugar, lemon juice, and ½ cup water in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat and stir until sugar dissolves. Transfer mixture to a bowl and refrigerate until chilled. Stir chile powder and cubed mango into the chilled mixture and pour into eight 3-oz. ice-pop molds (see page 119 for a source). Insert a Popsicle stick into each mold and freeze until pops are solid, about 3 hours more. To release ice pops from molds, run the bottom of the molds briefly under cold water.

Incredible Egg

A grill with a cult following

WHEN MY DAD, an officer in the United States Air Force, was flying between Travis Air Force Base, in California, and Japan, in the 1960s, one of the treasures he brought home was a charcoal grill that he called a *kamado* oven. This heavy, egg-shaped ceramic grill, based on a design for a clay rice steamer called a *mushikamado*, could sear T-bones over super-high heat or smoke pork low and slow without drying out the meat. In my dad's time, *kamado* ovens could be had for about \$7, making them popu-

lar souvenirs for U.S. military men. In the 1970s, a former Navy officer named Ed Fisher began manufacturing a version using ceramics with a high thermal resistance, meant to withstand searing heat without cracking. And he came up with a catchy name: the Big Green Egg. Today, Fisher is the high priest of a grilling cult whose faithful (collectively known as Eggheads) gather each fall by the thousands in Atlanta at an event called Eggtoberfest. Having cooked with an Egg many times, I understand their devotion. It's a snap to control (a bottom vent and top damper regulate airflow and temperature), and it produces results you can't achieve with a conventional kettle grill. Its insulating walls radiate so much

interior heat that fuel burns with extraordinary efficiency: a single load of lump charcoal will suffice for several hours of cooking—a dream for slow-smoked foods. My father eventually traded up to an Egg himself, and though the heavy grill is not all that portable (if dropped on its side, it still can crack), it came with us as we moved from California to the Philippines to Alabama to New Jersey (where my dad wore his government-issue parka to grill during snowstorms). Every place we lived, it sat outside the back door, a constant in a life where there wasn't a lot of it. And though its wheels finally rusted off its stand, the Egg grilled, smoked, and even roasted and baked just as well as ever. —Cathy Cavender

A damper in the lid of the Big Green Egg helps control interior airflow and cooking temperatures, from 200° for smoking to 750° for searing meat.

Wooden "Egg Mates"—one of several types of add-on work surfaces—are hinged so that they can be folded down when not in use. You can also buy a table with an opening in which to place an entire Egg.



Highly insulating ceramics, based on a technology developed by NASA for use on the space shuttle, ensures that foods stay moist and hot, while the grill's exterior remains relatively cool.

The bottom vent allows air to enter and pass through the lump charcoal, which is ready for use in only 10 to 15 minutes.

The "Nest," an adjustable base that's sold separately, helps make the Egg portable and raises it to a height that's comfortable for cooking.



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The new Porsche Cayenne Turbo

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Khartoum's Barbecue Hot Spot

Dressed in a traditional *tobe* wrap, Hanan Abdullah seasons chunks of goat meat with salt and pepper in her outdoor kitchen at Kandahar, a sprawling collection of barbecue stalls on the outskirts of Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. A helper takes the meat and places it on a round perforated-iron grill, which sends the alluring scent of smoke and searing meat into the hot desert air. "I have customers who come from all over the city to eat my food," Abdullah says. Those include me and my American health-worker colleague, Vicki; we've endured a 40-minute drive on Khartoum's notoriously congested roadways to enjoy Kandahar's famous grilled meats. (The market is named after the city in Afghanistan, a joking reference to how painfully far it is from Khartoum's downtown.) Twelve years ago, Abdullah and her family relocated to Khartoum from the central part of Sudan, fleeing drought and civil strife. Arriving with little more than what she could carry, Abdullah set up a small roadside operation selling grilled meat and bread. Over time, she saved enough to erect a tent stall, which is now strategically positioned at the entry of the market, which grew up organically as newcomers opened stalls. For Abdullah and the millions of other Sudanese like her who have come to the city for a better life, grilled meat—goat, sheep, beef, chicken, even camel is adored across Sudan—has been a popular point of entry into the local economy. She now employs a staff of five, including Selwah Hadir (pictured at left), who works the grill; her stall doubles as a home for her workers, who sleep on the cots used as seating for customers by day. While the meat cooks, Abdullah prepares a salad of diced cucumbers, onions, tomatoes, freshly ground peanuts, cloves, curry leaves, and coriander. Moments later, our meal is served on a large metal tray. We perch ourselves on stools and douse the meat with a fiery chile sauce, scooping it all up with fresh-baked bread and chasing it with the cooling salad. We finish off the feast with cardamom-spiced coffee, called *jebena*. Then, following the lead of customers at other stalls, we recline on cots beneath the shade of a tarp, sated and glad for having made the journey. —A. V. Crofts

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Solo Act

Remembering a father's solitary feats in the kitchen

WHEN IT CAME to cooking, my father, Ron Pandolfi (pictured above in 1981), preferred to go it alone. Each night, he would lock himself in the kitchen by stretching rubber bands around the knobs of the room's louvered French doors, ensuring that neither I nor my mother, nor even our faithful dog, Mitzy, could break in and interfere with his art.

He had spent much of his Springfield, Massachusetts, childhood learning how to cook red-sauce dishes alongside his six Italian-American siblings—five brothers and one tough-cookie sister—in the small cinder-block building that housed his father's restaurant and catering business. Maybe that's why he liked working alone.

No matter the reason, the fruits of Dad's solitary labors were so delicious that we could hardly protest his kitchen lockdown. My memories of the sounds and smells emanating from behind those doors are the fondest of my childhood: the clanging of pots and pans, the sizzle of sautéing onions, the "bum, ba-ba bum, ba-ba bum" noises he made as he hummed a great Strauss waltz, and, once dinner was simmering on the stove or roasting in the oven, the clink of ice going into a glass, followed by the splash of Chivas Regal being poured.

It's been 20 years since my father passed on at the incomplete age of 48, without so much

AUGUST 7 NATIONAL MUSTARD DAY

Middleton, Wisconsin
Hosted by the National Mustard Museum since 1991, this annual event celebrates condiments made with the spicy namesake seed. You can sample mustards from around the world, play ring toss with mustard bottles as the targets, and eat all the complimentary wieners you like, as long as you slather them with mustard—there's a \$10 surcharge for ketchup. Information: www.mustardmuseum.org.

AUGUST 19 FERMENTED HERRING SEASON BEGINS

Sweden
On the third Thursday in August each year, the season's *surströmming*, or fermented herrings, go on sale in Sweden. These Baltic herrings—caught in the spring, brined, and left to ferment before canning—are so well soured that consumers are advised to open the pungent, pressurized tins outdoors. Connoisseurs enjoy *surströmming* wrapped in a *klämma* (a soft flatbread) with butter or sour cream, chopped red onions, and thin-sliced fingerling potatoes.

AUGUST 24
WAFFLE IRON PATENTED
1869, Troy, New York
On this day, Cornelius Swartwout of Troy, New York, received a United States patent for the country's first "device to bake waffles," the popular breakfast dish adopted from the Netherlands. Designed to be used atop a coal-fired stove, the cooker consisted of a grooved metal ring that sat



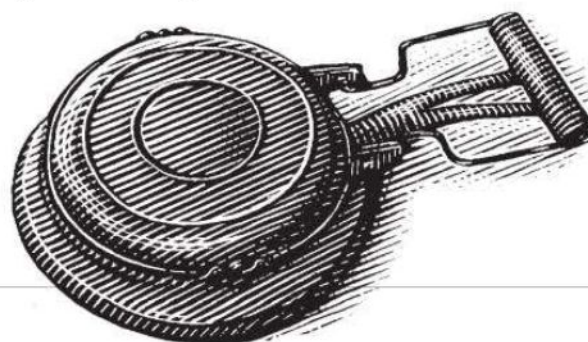
in place of a stove burner lid, as well as a two-sided, hinged, cast-iron griddle with a wooden handle. The griddle, which nestled within the ring, could be flipped to cook both sides of a waffle.

AUGUST 28 MELITZANA (EGGPLANT) FESTIVAL

Leonidio, Greece
This fest is held in a Peloponnesian town at the heart of the government-dictated Pro-



tected Designation of Origin for the eggplant known as *tsakoniki melitzana*, and it honors the small, striped, sweet-fleshed aubergine, as well as the local Tsakoniá community, an ethnic group of Dorian heritage who have long cooked this vegetable. Enjoy performances of Tsakoniko-style dances and sample dishes like moussaka, *papoutsakia* (stuffed eggplant), pickled eggplant, and *glyko melitzanaki*, an eggplant sweet. Information: 30/275/736-0203.



SEPTEMBER 4-14 PYEONGCHANG HYO-SEOK BUCKWHEAT FESTIVAL

Bongpyeong, Korea
The hometown of the Korean novelist Lee Hyoseok pays homage to the crop that inspired his book *When Buckwheat Flowers Bloom*. Festivalgoers gather in the buckwheat fields to revel in its delicate pink blooms, and markets serve dishes such as *memil naengmyeon* (cold buckwheat noodles) and *memiljunbyeong* (crisp buckwheat pancakes). Information: www.visitkorea.or.kr.

SEPTEMBER 15 "COUNTER SPACE: DESIGN AND THE MODERN KITCHEN"

New York City
Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art launches this exhibit on the evolution of the kitchen throughout the 20th century.



Displays include a complete 1926-27 Frankfurt Kitchen, designed to meet "modern" demands for space-saving, efficiency, and ergonomics, as well as a mobile fold-out kitchen unit manufactured by the Italian company Snidero in 1969, displayed along with architectural sketches and artworks devoted to the most important room in the house. The exhibit runs through March 21, 2011. Information: www.moma.org.

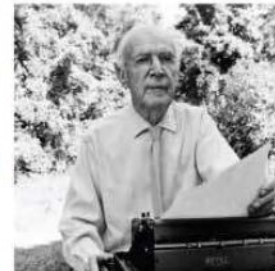
SEPTEMBER 18 WHOOPIE PIE FESTIVAL

Ronks, Pennsylvania
Though Mainers who grew up on the treat would contest the origins of the soft cookie-and-cream sandwich (pictured above), in Pennsylvania Dutch

country it is said that Amish women invented the whoopie pie as a way of using leftover cake batter, eliciting cries of "Whoopie!" from kids. At this festival, the "pie" is featured in more than 100 flavors, ranging from classic chocolate to peanut butter and jelly. Whoopie it up at events including a whoopie pie "long launch" and the creation of the world's largest whoopie pie. Information: www.whoopiepiefestival.com.

SEPTEMBER 20 Birthday: UPTON SINCLAIR

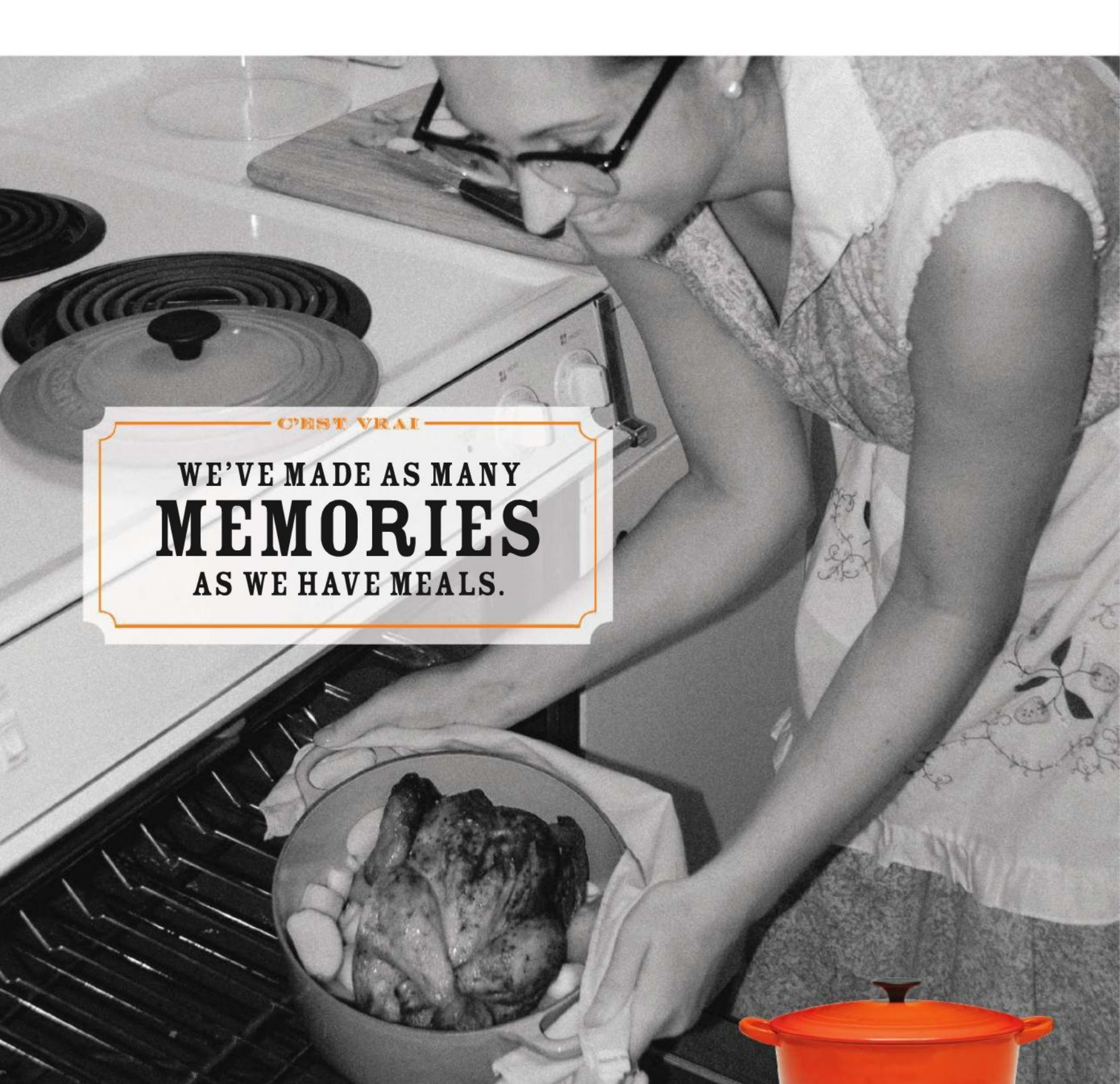
1878, Baltimore, Maryland
In 1904, on assignment for the socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason*, the writer Upton Sinclair (below) went undercover in the Chicago stockyards. The result was his novel *The Jungle*, which exposed the corruption and dangerous conditions within the meatpacking industry and helped to prompt passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection



Act. Sinclair said of the book, "I aimed at the public's heart, and, by accident, I hit it in the stomach."

SEPTEMBER 25-26 GREAT BRITISH CHEESE FESTIVAL

Cardiff, United Kingdom
Seven thousand cheese lovers converge on 2,000-year-old Cardiff Castle to taste and buy from a selection of nearly 500 sheep, goat, cow, and buffalo cheeses. Awards are conferred on worthy wheels, cheese-making classes are conducted, and, with sturdy rounds of Lincolnshire Poacher replacing balls, sportsmen compete at cheese tossing and skittles (think miniature bowling). Information: www.greatbritishcheesefestival.co.uk.



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as showing me how to crack an egg. His insistence on privacy meant I'd never seen him prepare any of his dishes. And so, a few months ago, still piqued by memories after all these years, I finally asked my mother to give me a few of Dad's recipes. She suggested I start with a bold 1970s creation he called Chicken Galliano. The dish, based on a recipe in a booklet that came tied to the neck of a bottle of the namesake Italian digestif, was her favorite.

I didn't remember Chicken Galliano at all, but my mind pulled a Proust as soon as I began sautéing the chicken in the golden liqueur. My apartment was enveloped in the sweet aroma of anise and vanilla mingling with browning butter and melting cheese, and

that's when I recalled what home had smelled like back when Dad was alive. And while there was more than enough chicken to feed a few friends, I hadn't thought to invite any. So, in honor of Dad's memory, I sat down to a dinner for one, eating straight from the pan. —Keith Pandolfi

CHICKEN GALLIANO

SERVES 4-6

Galliano, an Italian liqueur flavored with 30 herbs and spices, including anise and vanilla, gives the sauce for these stuffed chicken breasts a complex sweetness.

- 6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, pounded $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick
- Kosher salt and freshly ground

- black pepper, to taste
- 12 tbsp. herbed goat cheese, softened
- 6 thin slices prosciutto
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter, chilled
- 10 oz. cremini mushrooms, sliced
- Flour, for dredging
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups chicken broth
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Galliano liqueur
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped parsley
- 4 cups cooked rice, for serving

1 Season chicken with salt and pepper. Working with one breast half at a time, spread one side with 2 tbsp. goat cheese and top with one slice prosciutto; roll into a tight cylinder. Using kitchen twine, tie chicken roll $1\frac{1}{2}$ " in from each end. Snip off excess twine.

2 Heat 3 tbsp. butter in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms and cook, without stirring, until browned, 4-5 minutes. Stir mushrooms and continue cooking until softened, about 8 minutes. Transfer to a plate; wipe out skillet. Put flour on a plate; dredge each chicken roll in flour. Heat 2 tbsp. butter and the oil in skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook, turning, until browned and cooked through, 12-14 minutes. Transfer chicken rolls to a plate. Add broth and Galliano to skillet; boil, stirring, until sauce has reduced by a third, 4-5 minutes. Return mushrooms and chicken to skillet; cook, turning to coat in sauce, until warmed through, about 5 minutes.

3 Transfer chicken to a platter. Remove skillet from heat; swirl in remaining butter to make a smooth sauce. Spoon sauce over chicken; sprinkle with parsley. Serve with rice.

Just Ask

Hopping Good

A brewer's staple is plate-worthy, too

I love the flavor of heavily hopped beer. Is it possible to eat hops?

—Kristen Remeza, Austin, Texas

IT IS INDEED—if they're young. Hops, whose flowers impart their bitterness to beer, mature in the fall. But earlier in the season, the tender shoots have a flavor that resembles asparagus. In Belgium, the shoots are blanched and served with a mousseline sauce, a whipped cream-enriched Hollandaise. Venetian risottos, Roman soups, and Tuscan omelettes are among the regional Italian dishes



cooked with wild hop shoots, called *luppoli*. And, though they're not commonly cooked fresh in the U.S., when Puterbaugh Farms in Mabton, Washington, has enough shoots to pickle, they sell them via mail order. —Kimberley Lovato

Have a question? Send it to: just.ask@saveur.com; or Just Ask, SAVEUR, 15 E. 32 St., 12th floor, New York, NY 10016.



ONE GOOD BOTTLE For 5,000 years, grapes have been grown in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, but making wine in modern-day Lebanon isn't easy. Just ask Sami and Ramzi Ghosn, the brothers behind Bekaa Valley's Massaya Winery. In 1975, civil war broke out, and the Ghosn family was forced to evacuate their vineyard. It took 17 years for the brothers, who were children when they left Lebanon, to return; when they did, they planted French varieties, which thrived on the high-altitude estate. Though regional politics have been a persistent

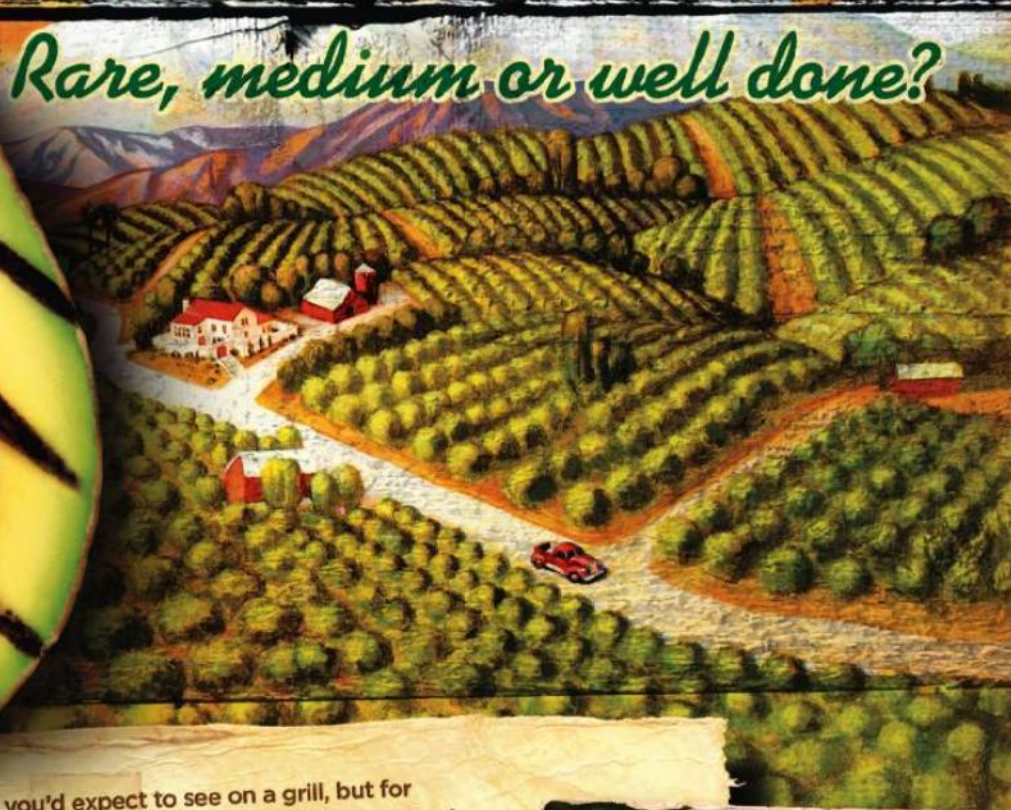
disruption—in 2006, Ramzi spent 35 days huddled in a vineyard foxhole while Israeli bombs and Hezbollah rockets fell around him—the valley's clay and limestone soils, copious sunshine, and cool nights "surpass humans' momentary issues," says Sami. The *terroir* expresses itself elegantly in the **2006 Massaya Gold Reserve** (\$34), a blend of cabernet sauvignon, mourvèdre, and syrah. Aged two years in new French oak, this deep-garnet wine offers a spicy nose, a mouthful of cassis, and solid tannins that give way to a languid finish. It's great with all types of grilled red meat. —Betsy Andrews

Would you like that

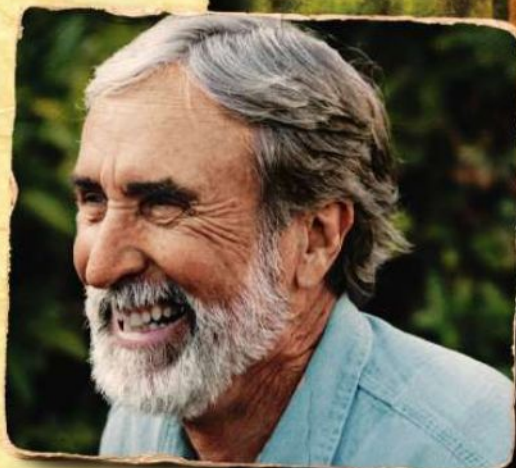
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An avocado isn't the first thing you'd expect to see on a grill, but for Gene Bianchi it's one of his favorite ways to eat them. Ten years as a California grower have given him ample time to discover new recipes. But one ingredient remains constant and that's the touch of Gene's hands. Under his expert care, Gene's crop flourishes in a 100% organic environment. And he personally inspects every bin of avocados that leaves his grove. With over a thousand trees, that's quite a task, but Gene wouldn't have it any other way. It's that kind of dedication and care that ensures the exceptional taste of California Avocados will remain constant—no matter how you choose to prepare them. To find Gene's recipe for grilled California Avocados, visit CaliforniaAvocado.com.



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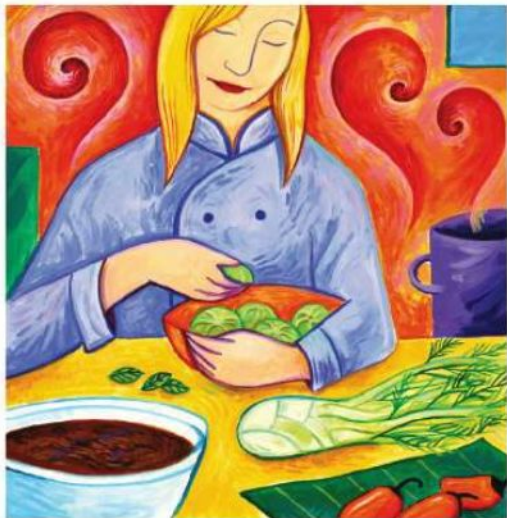


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Command Performance

A chef prepares a Latin American feast at the White House



I RECEIVED THE CALL from the White House while 11,000 feet above sea level on a visit to the Incan Temple of the Sun, in Cuzco, Peru. Would I cook for Fiesta Latina, a reception being thrown by the Obamas for 400 guests in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month? Maybe it was oxygen deprivation, but I grew dizzy. I'd never been asked to do anything this high-profile. Anxious, I accepted as graciously as I could. You don't say no to the President.

When I returned to the States, I did what I always do when I'm nervous: I researched. I read accounts of Abigail Adams's reception at the newly completed White House in 1801, when floating island, a dessert of meringues and custard, was served. I read about Eisenhower's rooftop barbecues and canapés served on the White House lawn when Jackie Kennedy was in residence. And now there were the Obamas, arguably the most food-savvy First Family yet: avid restaurant-goers, supporters of sustainable agriculture, and originators of the White House Food Policy councils.

My head reeled. What was I going to cook? How would history judge me? Eventually, I calmed down and started to conceive a menu that would tell the story of Latin American cuisine through its staples: corn, beans, peppers, pork, chocolate. I included Puerto Rican *pasteles* (tamales made with starchy vegetables) and a fresh-corn Cuban polenta called *tamal en cazuela*, as well as the island's feast dish: *lechón asado*, or roast pork in a cumin-allspice adobo, plus

several sweets, including a chocolate-cheese flan and a *cortadito* (espresso) crème brûlée.

I arrived at the White House two days before Fiesta Latina. There, I met Cristeta Comerford, the White House chef, whose staff would help with my preparations. Cris showed me around the kitchen, a surprisingly small space whose equipment includes 12 burners, a gas grill, a salamander broiler, and a convection oven that doubles as a steamer.

Then we got down to work. Though the purchasing department had already delivered most of the ingredients I'd asked for, I picked some produce straight from the Obamas' garden. The 1,100-square-foot organic plot on the South Lawn that contains cilantro, green oak leaf lettuce, and black kale, plus chiles, parsley, and sweet orange tomatoes, some of which I cooked with tomatillos and fennel for a Brazilian *arrumadinho*, a composed dish of black-eyed peas, vegetable salad, and *farofa* (seasoned and toasted cassava flour).

As we cooked together, despite the pressure and time constraints, the White House staff and I learned from one another. When we discovered that we had received fresh pork belly instead of the slab bacon I'd requested to accompany the *tamal en cazuela*, Cris showed me how to cure the pork on the spot, brining it before smoking it with applewood chips in the convection oven. In turn, I taught the staff how to work with many ingredients that were new to them: cacao beans, hibiscus, malanga, as well as Peruvian purple corn, which the White House pastry chef, Bill Yosses, boiled with pineapple and dried fruits before mixing it all with sweet potato flour to create a rich pudding.

On Fiesta night, in the majestic Blue Room, which was decorated with the fresh chiles on the stem I had requested in lieu of flowers, I watched from the sidelines as the guests ate with gusto. The President, who revealed that he had been receiving samples of my dishes and tasting them all along as we cooked, was careful to say how much he enjoyed the food; and Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor even remarked that my *pasteles* were as good as her mother's. If praise from such high authorities is any indication, I trust that—thanks to the help of the White House staff—future historians will judge me kindly. —*Maricel E. Presilla*

THE PANTRY, page 119: Information on visiting Sudan and on where to purchase ice-pop molds, the Big Green Egg, pickled hop shoots, and Massaya wines.

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CELLAR

7 Reasons to Love Greek Wines

A new generation is renewing Greece's ancient art

BY DAVID ROSENGARTEN

THE VINE DID NOT ORIGINATE in Greece; it's likely that the Caucasus, to the east, had that honor. But the ancient Greeks were making wine from grapes long before most civilizations, maybe as early as 7000 B.C. And yet, many Americans' knowledge of the country's viticulture begins and ends with retsina, the popular white wine flavored with pine resin. Finally, things are beginning to change: many Greek winemakers have started attracting international attention for their sophisticated wines, which exemplify the great crispness that makes Greek whites such natural partners to seafood and the balanced restraint that suits Greek reds so well to lamb and grilled foods. There are plenty of reasons to embrace Greek wine; below are seven of my favorites. (See *THE PANTRY*, page 119, for sources.)

Native White Grapes

Greek wine growers are learning to maximize the potential of their indigenous white grapes, knowing that a little bit of mountain air, and a willingness to pick the grapes before they swell to cumbersome ripeness, create crackling-crisp white wines that are gorgeous with many Greek *mezedes* and with seafood. The big star is moschofilero, a variety from the central Peloponnese that creates orange blossom-scented wines that are racy on the palate, light and airy, and possessed of a bracing acidity. My favorite is the 2009 Semeli Mountain Sun White (\$12);

it has a nose touched with white pepper, and a clear, crisp palate. Robola, roditis, and savatiano are other exciting white varieties. The 2009 Ambelones from Domaine Vassiliou (\$17), produced east of Athens, is a blend of sweet savatiano and melony roditis; low in alcohol (12 percent), it has a memorable lime-leaf quality and fine acidity.

Great Rosés

Many Greek rosé producers pack their wine with lots of fruit, yet the wines show an uncommon lightness and elegance at the same time. Excellent rosés are being made from

north to south in Greece. One of my top choices is the dry Kir-Yianni Rosé Akakies (\$17), from Amyndeon in Macedonia, in the north. The 2009 has lovely melon and tomato aromas, plus a palate that uncannily combines grip and refreshment. Another winner is the 2009 Gaia 14-18h Rosé (\$16),

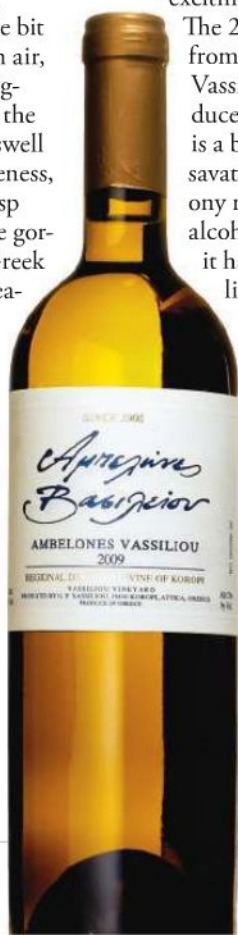
from the Peloponnese; it has a playful, Barbie-pink hue and one of the liveliest watermelon-pear noses I've ever sniffed. The island of Crete has recently emerged as a rosé star; the Douloufakis winery there combines the local red grape kotsifali with syrah to create a dry 2009 Enotria Rosé (\$14) with bounce and acid.

Big Reds with Nuance

Greek red wines are traditionally light-hued and light-bodied, but today a cadre of pioneering winemakers are deepening their wines' color, fruit, and texture in deference to 21st-century tastes, without creating jammy, grandstanding



New World-style reds. The most famous area for richer reds from indigenous grapes is Nemea, southwest of Athens, a stronghold of Greece's breakout red grape, agiorgitiko. The 2008 Averoff Fresco (\$13) is a delightful choice, full-bodied but fruity and easy to quaff. A bit more structured, the 2008 Nemea from Domaine Harlatis (\$10) is a medium-dark purple wine with plum and leafy-green notes. The 2006 Gaia Estate (\$50), from one of Greece's most important wineries, has a wonderful mineral and ripe black currant nose and a marvelous concentration that will mellow beautifully with 10 to 15 years of aging. The refosco grape, which came to Greece more than 150 years ago from Friuli, Italy, is another heavy hitter; Domaine Mercouri's 2006 Estate Red (\$25) from the Peloponnese is dark garnet with a nose of leather, spice, and chocolate.



A worker harvesting assyrtiko grapes on Santorini.

A romantic couple stands on a wooden pier with a thatched roof, overlooking the ocean at sunset. The scene is illuminated by warm, golden light, with palm trees and the couple's reflection visible in the calm water.

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Xinomavro grapes, left. Right, winemaker Yiannis Paraskevopoulos.

Xino-mavro

My favorite Greek reds, hands down, are made from the native xinomavro grape. It's cultivated all over northern Greece, but its epicenter is the region surrounding the town of Naoussa, my personal Shangri-la of red wine in Greece. Like a classic burgundy or barolo, the best xinomavros yield an exquisitely complex nose and age beautifully.

When xinomavro wine is young, it's light-bodied, shows mellow fruit (strawberries or raspberries), and has soft tannins that are superlative with grilled foods. Excellent introductions are the 2006 Kir-Yianni Ramnista (\$30), with its red-fruit nose layered with smoke, and the light and tender 2006 Karydas Naoussa (\$26). As xinomavro ages, something extraordinary happens; the wine lurches into tomato territory—we're talking ripe tomato, even tomato jam. And as it reaches full maturity, xinomavro develops hints of earth, white truffle, cedar, even tobacco. Old xinomavro is one of the wine world's great thrills, and luckily,

some old ones are available in the United States. The 2000 Vaeni Grand Reserve (\$23) delivers a compelling mingling of tomato, cherry, and tobacco aromas and a lean, slightly green, exotically complex flavor. The 2003 Grande Reserve Naoussa from Boutari (\$25) carries a lovely fruit nose, with hints of leather and tomato.

Wines of Santorini

The island of Santorini, in the southern Aegean Sea, is a mound of volcanic rock with mineral-rich soil, whipped by strong winds that have prompted the winemakers to train their vines to curl into rounded "baskets" hugging the dirt. This fine marriage of fruit and terrain yields dry, austere wines made from the assyrtiko grape that manage to be both rich and steely at the same time. To taste Santorini assyrtiko at its best, try Gaia's vibrant 2008 Thalassitis (\$26) and the bone-dry, lemony 2009 Argyros Assyrtiko (\$26).

Dessert Wines

Late-harvest, sweet wines from Greece have always



had a market; syrupy muscats from the Greek islands, for example, have been coveted across Europe since the Middle Ages. The most famous island for desert muscat is Samos; my favorite bottle is the super-concentrated Samos Nectar (\$28), made by the island's winemaking cooperative; it has a tawny color and blazes with a raisiny, caramel nose. Another duly venerated Greek dessert wine is the vin santo from Santorini, made from that island's storied assyrtiko grapes (see No. 5), some of which have been dried in the sun to concentrate their flavors. Try the 2003 Sigalas Vinsanto Santorini (\$50); it has an alluring amber color, a viscous texture, and tropical fruit flavors.

Real Retsina

I love that retsina is born of



a 2,000-year-old tradition, held over from the days when amphorae of white wine had their stoppers sealed with pine resin. But I love even more that the rasp of the resin is so harmonious with kalamata olives, feta, and many other Greek foods. If you don't like retsina, it may be because unscrupulous producers have long used the resin to cover the taste of oxidized wine. But find a fresh and graceful version, such as the inexpensive Malamartina (\$4) from Macedonia, and a lightbulb is sure to go off. Better still, seek out retsinas from Greece's best-known winemakers; the astonishing Gaia Ritinitis Nobilis (\$16) has the concentrated feel and complexity of a grand wine, with just a hint of high-quality resin from Greece's Aleppo pines.



Above, from left: harvesting grapes in Macedonia; rows of vines on the slopes of Mount Athos, in northern Greece.



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INGREDIENT

A Thing of Beauty

A cook ponders the magical appeal of gelatin

BY SARA DICKERMAN

FORGET ABOUT POTS BOILING. I HAVE a corollary to that old kitchen saw: Watched gelatin never sets. At least not for me, and particularly not when I was a line cook a decade ago, working at Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California. During my brief tenure there, it was invariably a test of nerves—from the moment I clocked in until dinner service began—on the days when aspic was on the menu. First, I'd set about making the consommé, a flavorful distillation of beef or chicken stock that had been prepared beforehand. Next, I would bloom sheets of gelatin in cold water before mixing them with the broth. I'd set out several pans, pour a thin layer of liquid into each, and place them in the refrigerator. Then I would wait. Periodically, I'd poke and prod the chilling liquid, fearful that it wouldn't set before dinner—which, thank heavens, it usually did. Just before service, I'd slice and spoon out the glimmering cubes, adding them as a garnish to a terrine or as the main ingredient in a salad so that the aspic's concentrated flavor could mingle with, say, roasted beets and fresh horseradish. As terrifying as the timing was, the results were always stunning. The aspic was shimmering and cool, and it melted so voluptuously in the mouth.

Of course, the gelatin dishes that I'd grown up with were nowhere near as elegant as that. I might have had a thing for black cherry Jell-O as a kid, marveling at the suspended peaches and plums my mother

GELATINS COULD BE GRAND SET PIECES, STUDDED WITH OLIVES AND LOBSTER MEAT, OR WHIMSICAL DESSERTS LAYERED WITH MARSHMALLOWS

had embedded in it, but by the time I was in my late teens, I'd come to regard that stuff more as camp than as cuisine. My college friends and I made Jell-O, sure, but usually just for vodka shots. And later, when I was an aspiring food snob, if some ambrosia salad, bouncy with canned mandarins and marshmallows, showed up at a holiday potluck, I'd pass it over with a chuckle.

It took me years to understand that there was love in that chuckle, not just mockery. Working with gelatin in restaurant kitchens, I realized that those wobbly, Technicolor American desserts I'd made fun of were actually part of a much grander culinary tradition.

GELATIN IS THE BEST KNOWN OF SEVERAL ingredients—technically known as hydrocolloids—that can capture food as an unsteady solid. I've used most of them at some point: pectin (derived from fruits)

to make preserves, or agar-agar (which comes from sea algae) to make Japanese bean jellies. There are other gelling agents, like xanthan gum and sodium alginate, that are practically unknown to home cooks; they're used by commercial food processors to thicken, stabilize, or otherwise alter the texture of food.

But no hydrocolloid has been as influential in Western cuisine as gelatin, and I am thankful to the nameless soul who first discovered it—perhaps in a bowl of leftover soup. As most home cooks have noticed at one time or another, the juices from cooked meat can gel when chilled overnight. This is because heat causes the twisted strands of collagen, prevalent in skin, connective tissue, and bones, to unwind and mix with cooking liquids; as the liquid cools, the strands tangle, creating a matrix that impedes the movement of water. Gelatin takes form.

Reading old cookbooks, I've always been awed by just how impressive the gelatin molds of yore must have been—I've seen illustrations of ones studded with whole truffles and topped with a statue of cupid—especially considering what people used to have to do to make them. Making gelatin required simmering veal and beef knuckles, bones, and hooves to extract the collagen, clarifying the broth with constant skimming, and then straining it through linen napkins before flavoring it with brandy or herbs and chilling it to set. The process was so laborious, in fact, that by the 19th century, gelatin molds had become a kind of social currency: the finer the house, the blingier the jellies. Such spectacles were nearly impossible to craft outside a well-staffed household or restaurant kitchen.

The process of making gelatin was crying out for a shortcut, and it came in the late 19th century, first in sheet form and then in even easier powdered form, which was popularized by Charles Knox, of Johnstown, New York, who owned a leather glove company and thus had access to plenty of spare animal parts. But it was, of course, Jell-O, the combination of powdered gelatin and fruit flavoring introduced in 1897, that placed gelatin and its molded glories in the hands of the average homemaker. The Jell-O company marketed its product as the modern woman's newest kitchen ally: glimmering and elegant, not too heavy or rich, and quick as a wink to assemble. Soon came dishes like “perfection salad”: slivered cabbage, minced peppers, and chopped celery set in luminous aspic, a dish that managed to preserve the most perishable part of dinner in neat, clean, delicious slices. Here were home-style versions of those grand set pieces studded with olives and lobster meat, and, alongside those, whimsical

Facing page, clockwise from top left: eggs in aspic; raspberries in pink champagne gelée; coconut gelatin with glazed strawberries; orange-, chocolate-, and strawberry-flavored marshmallows (see pages 40 and 42 for recipes).

SARA DICKERMAN's most recent article for *SAVEUR* was “The Big Chill” (May 2010).





A perfection salad of cabbage, celery, bell pepper, and pimentos in gelatin, left. Right, oysters topped with shiso, ponzu, and apple-wasabi gelées.

desserts spiked with soda pop or layered with marshmallows.

There was a sheer force of will applied to the jellied dishes of the early and mid-20th century. If a food was eaten at the American table, then a home economist found a way to encase it in gelatin. A quick flip through the vintage recipe brochures I've collected over the years offers forth instructions for making such molded glories as Jellied Bouillon with Frankfurters, Beet Gelatin with Gefilte Fish, Jellied Rhubarb with Walnuts, and Tongue Mousse. Some had sophisticated airs, but just as many were meant to honor thrift and resourcefulness. "Any clever person," wrote Irma Rombauer in the inaugural, 1931 edition of *Joy of Cooking* (Bobbs-Merrill), "can take a few desolate looking ice box leftovers and glorify them into a tempting Aspic Salad." A survey of the many gelatin recipes in those old publications reveals a fascinating story. It is the tale of a single ingredient that seemingly overnight went from being the most difficult to master to being the easiest.

I EAT GELATIN DISHES OFTEN, BUT THE last encounter I had with the jiggly dessert known as Jell-O was in a hospital room, a couple of years ago, when I was recovering from surgery. The setting was emblematic of what has happened to the food's once mighty cachet. Still, I have to admit that while the bright red cherry Jell-O was wildly sweet, it was cool and utterly soothing—a slurp of childhood that was exactly what I needed at the time.

It occurred to me then and there why gelatin is such a powerful and lovable food. It's not just the wink-wink nostalgia of those fanciful Jell-O creations. Nor is it solely the fact that gelatin, in its purest form, has always been relevant in classic and cutting-edge restaurant kitchens, responsible

for everything from quivering panna cottas to meat-studded terrines to classic *oeufs en gelée* (barely cooked eggs encased within aspic). Gelatin is appealing because of its fun wobble, its uncanny texture, its cool refreshment, and its amazing ability to give substance and form to flavors that are usually fleeting. It's a medium as much as it is an ingredient, a liberating tool that brings out the creative cook in us all.

So, I wasn't surprised when I learned, a few years ago, that gelatin plays a fundamental role in the highly technical cooking practiced by avant-garde chefs like Spain's Ferran Adrià. His first international sensation was *espuma*, or foam, a trick made possible by taking a liquid or purée of anything, from espresso to mushrooms, and stabilizing it with gelatin before shooting it out of a pressurized canister designed to whip cream. With their fine, mousseline bubbles and bracing intensity of flavor, those foams made Adrià famous, but he kept experimenting, using gelatin and other gelling agents to make dishes that would once have seemed impossible: hot aspics made from agar-agar, for example, or "caviar" made of melon jus encapsulated within a thin jellied skin. The disorientation is part of the fun.

Other chefs have joined Adrià in pursuit of improbable textures and flavors, sometimes using those other hydrocolloids that had hitherto been employed only in commercial food processing. But even food futurists like Wylie Dufresne, the chef of the pioneering restaurant wd-50 in New York City, don't slight the appeal of the original hydrocolloid. "It's the only thing in its category that melts when it gets into your mouth," he told me. "Gelatin is the holy grail."

These days, when I spoon a chilly layer of champagne gelée over summer's last flush of berries, I know exactly what he means. 🐸

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RASPBERRIES IN PINK CHAMPAGNE GELÉE

SERVES 8

These simple gelled fruit desserts—based on a recipe in chef Marco Pierre White's *The Mirabelle Cookbook* (Random House, 1999)—are an elegant way to serve summer berries. The dish is pictured on page 37.

- 1 750-ml bottle pink champagne or sparkling rosé, chilled
- 2 tbsp. unflavored powdered gelatin
- 1½ cups sugar
- Canola oil, for greasing
- 40 fresh raspberries (about 8 oz.)
- 2 small bananas, cut into coins

① Pour ½ cup champagne into a bowl; sprinkle in gelatin; let sit 5 minutes. Heat remaining champagne and sugar in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat; stir in gelatin mixture. Let cool for 10 minutes.

② Grease eight 4-oz. ramekins. Pour 1½ tbsp. champagne mixture into each mold; chill 30 minutes. Put 5 raspberries into each mold; add enough champagne mixture to half-cover the berries. Chill until set, about 30 minutes. Arrange 4 banana slices, overlapping them slightly, in each mold. Add remaining champagne mixture; chill until completely set, at least 4 hours.

③ To serve, slide a knife along edge of each mold; set molds in a bowl of hot water for 5 seconds. Invert molds onto plates.

OEUF EN GELÉE

(Eggs in Aspic)

SERVES 4

In this classic French dish, typically served as a first course, gelatin is used to encase poached eggs in a delicate consommé. The dish is pictured on page 37.

- 1½ cups chicken broth
- 2 tsp. peppercorns, crushed

- 6 sprigs parsley, chopped
- 3 sprigs tarragon, chopped
- 3 egg whites
- ½ leek or small onion, chopped
- ½ rib celery, chopped
- ½ small carrot, chopped
- 3 tbsp. port
- 1½ tbsp. unflavored powdered gelatin, softened in ½ cup cold water
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Canola oil, for greasing
- 3 bell peppers, cored, seeded, and cut into small ½" diamonds
- 4 eggs, poached and chilled
- Baby greens, for garnish

① Combine broth, peppercorns, herbs, egg whites, leeks, celery, and carrots in a 1-qt. saucepan. Slowly bring to a boil, stirring constantly, until egg whites start to solidify into a soft crust, 5–10 minutes. Stop stirring; simmer over low heat for 20 minutes. Set a sieve over a bowl; line sieve with a coffee filter. Strain broth without pressing the solids; discard solids. Add port and gelatin mixture and stir to dissolve; season with salt. Refrigerate aspic until cooled but not set.

② Grease four 4-oz. oval aspic molds (see page 119). Spoon about 2 tsp. of aspic into each mold. Chill until almost set, 8–10 minutes. Arrange 6 pepper diamonds, skin side up, in each mold on the aspic; top with 1 tbsp. aspic. Chill until set. Transfer eggs to paper towels; trim away ragged edges of whites. Put an egg inside each mold; cover eggs by ¼" with remaining aspic. Chill until completely set, about 2 hours. To serve, slide a knife along edge of molds; set in a bowl of hot water for 5 seconds. Invert aspic onto plates; garnish with greens.

COCONUT GELATIN WITH GLAZED STRAWBERRIES

SERVES 6

The New York City-based chef Pichet Ong uses gelatin and citrus juice to coat strawberries in a sweet sauce before plating them with cubes of coconut-flavored gelatin. The dessert

is pictured on page 37.

FOR THE COCONUT GELATIN:

- Canola oil, for greasing
- 6 tbsp. canned coconut milk
- 3 tbsp. sugar
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 1½ tsp. unflavored powdered gelatin, softened in 1 tbsp. cold water
- 3 egg whites

FOR THE STRAWBERRIES:

- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ tsp. vanilla extract
- Pinch of kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. unflavored powdered gelatin, softened in 1 tbsp. cold water
- 12 oz. strawberries, halved
- Zest of 1 lemon
- Mint leaves, for garnish

① Make the coconut gelatin: Grease an 8" x 5" loaf pan; line bottom and sides with parchment paper; grease paper and set aside. Heat coconut milk, 2 tbsp. sugar, and salt in a small saucepan over medium-high heat; cook, stirring often, until mixture reduces slightly, 4–5 minutes. Remove from heat. Add gelatin mixture and whisk until dissolved; let cool. Meanwhile, using a hand mixer, whisk egg whites in a bowl until frothy. While whisking, add remaining sugar and whisk until stiff peaks form. Gently fold egg whites into coconut mixture; pour into prepared pan. Chill until completely set, about 6 hours.

② Make the glazed strawberries: Heat orange juice, sugar, vanilla, and salt in a small saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring, until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat; whisk in gelatin. Pour mixture into a medium bowl; chill for 1 hour. Gently stir in strawberries and lemon zest; let sit for 10 minutes.

③ To serve, release coconut gelatin from pan by sliding a knife along edge of pan. Cut gelatin into ¾" cubes (or larger squares, if desired). Divide strawberries between 6 plates;

top with coconut cubes. Garnish with mint leaves.

PERFECTION SALAD

SERVES 12

Refreshing molded salads like this one were wildly popular when a version of this recipe was first published, in *Knox Gelatine: Dainty Dishes for Dainty People* (Knox, 1931). Serve the dish (pictured on page 38) in slices as a side for grilled meats or salmon.

- ½ cup sugar
- ⅓ cup rice vinegar
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. unflavored powdered gelatin, softened in ½ cup cold water
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 1 cup finely shredded cabbage
- 2 jarred pimentos, minced
- 1 green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and minced
- Canola oil, for greasing

Stir together sugar, vinegar, lemon juice, gelatin, and salt in a small saucepan over medium heat until gelatin dissolves; chill 30 minutes. Stir in remaining ingredients. Grease a 12" x 4" x 2½" loaf pan and transfer gelatin mixture to mold. Chill until set, about 6 hours. To release salad from mold, slide a knife along the edge of the mold; set mold in a bowl of hot water for 5 seconds. Invert salad onto a serving dish.

ORANGE MARSHMALLOWS

MAKES 40

Gelatin is responsible for giving form to marshmallows. This recipe comes from *Chocolates and Confections* by Peter P. Greweling (Wiley, 2010). The three flavors described below are pictured on page 37.

- Canola oil, for greasing
- 1½ cups sugar
- ¾ cup light corn syrup
- ¼ cup honey
- 3 tbsp. unflavored powdered gelatin, softened in ½ cup cold water

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- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup orange zest
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. orange extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. yellow food coloring
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. red food coloring
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup confectioners' sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cornstarch

① Grease an 8" x 8" baking pan, line bottom and sides with parchment paper, and grease paper. Grease a rubber spatula; set aside.

② Combine sugar, syrup, honey, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a simmer; cook, without stirring, until syrup reaches 250° on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat; let cool to 220°.

③ Meanwhile, bring $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water to a boil in a small saucepan. Place bowl of gelatin over boiling water; whisk until gelatin becomes liquid. Transfer to bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk; stir in zest, extract, and food colorings. Add cooled sugar syrup to gelatin; whisk on high speed until mixture holds stiff peaks, 5–6 minutes. Pour mixture into prepared pan; smooth top with oiled spatula; let cool until set, 5–6 hours.

④ Combine confectioners' sugar and cornstarch in a bowl and transfer to a strainer; dust work surface with mixture. Slide a knife around edge of pan to release marshmallows; remove from pan. Dust cocoa mixture over top. Using a slicing knife dusted with cocoa mixture, cut marshmallows into forty $1\frac{1}{2}$ " squares. Toss marshmallows with remaining cornstarch mixture.

CHOCOLATE MARSHMALLOWS

MAKES 40

We use Dutch-process cocoa powder here because it's mild and won't overwhelm the sweetness of the marshmallows.

Canola oil, for greasing

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup light corn syrup
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey
- 3 tbsp. unflavored powdered

- gelatin, softened in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Dutch-process cocoa powder, sifted
- 2 tbsp. cornstarch

① Grease an 8" x 8" baking pan, line bottom and sides with parchment paper, and grease paper. Grease a rubber spatula; set aside.

② Combine sugar, syrup, honey, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a simmer; cook, without stirring, until syrup reaches 250° on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat; let cool to 220°.

③ Meanwhile, bring $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water to a boil in a small saucepan. Place bowl of gelatin over boiling water; whisk until gelatin becomes liquid. Transfer to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk; add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cocoa powder. Add cooled sugar syrup to gelatin; whisk on high speed until mixture holds stiff peaks, 5–6 minutes. Pour mixture into prepared pan; smooth top with oiled spatula; let cool until set, 5–6 hours.

④ Combine remaining cocoa powder and cornstarch in a bowl and transfer to a strainer; dust work surface with mixture. Slide a knife around edge of pan to release marshmallows; remove from pan. Dust cocoa mixture over top. Using a slicing knife dusted with cocoa mixture, cut marshmallows into forty $1\frac{1}{2}$ " squares. Toss marshmallows with remaining cocoa mixture.

STRAWBERRY MARSHMALLOWS

MAKES 40

Dried strawberries give these fluffy treats a remarkably deep fruit flavor.

Canola oil, for greasing

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup light corn syrup
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey
- 3 tbsp. unflavored powdered gelatin, softened in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. red food coloring
- 6 oz. dried strawberries, minced

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup plus 1 tbsp. cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup confectioners' sugar

① Grease an 8" x 8" baking pan, line bottom and sides with parchment paper, and grease paper. Grease a rubber spatula; set aside.

② Combine sugar, syrup, honey, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a simmer; cook, without stirring, until syrup reaches 250° on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat; let cool to 220°.

③ Meanwhile, bring $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water to a boil in a small saucepan. Place bowl of gelatin over boiling water; whisk until gelatin becomes liquid. Transfer to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk; add food coloring. Add cooled sugar syrup to gelatin; whisk on high speed until mixture holds stiff peaks, 5–6 minutes. In a small bowl, toss together strawberries and 1 tbsp. cornstarch; add to marshmallow mixture; mix to incorporate. Pour mixture into prepared pan; smooth top with oiled spatula; let cool until set, 5–6 hours.

④ Combine remaining cornstarch and confectioners' sugar in a bowl and transfer to a strainer; dust work surface with mixture. Slide a knife around edge of pan to release marshmallows; remove from pan. Dust cornstarch mixture over top. Using a slicing knife dusted with cornstarch mixture, cut marshmallows into forty $1\frac{1}{2}$ " squares. Toss marshmallows with remaining cornstarch mixture.

OYSTERS IN GELÉE

Chef Eric Ripert of Le Bernardin in New York City pairs Kumamoto oysters on the half shell with tiny, melt-in-your-mouth cubes of aspic in various flavors. The dish is pictured on page 38.

Canola oil, for greasing

FOR THE APPLE AND WASABI GELÉE:

- 1 lb. green apples, chopped
- 1 tbsp. wasabi paste
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt

- $2\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. unflavored powdered gelatin, softened in 2 tbsp. cold water

FOR THE SHISO GELÉE:

- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt
- 30 shiso leaves, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp. unflavored powdered gelatin, softened in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cold water

FOR THE PONZU GELÉE:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 tbsp. ponzu sauce
- 2 tsp. unflavored powdered gelatin, softened in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water
- 3 dozen oysters on the half shell, for serving

① Grease three 8" x 8" baking pans, line bottoms and sides with parchment paper, and grease paper; set aside.

② Make the apple and wasabi gelée: Purée apples, wasabi, lemon juice, salt, and 2 tbsp. water in a blender. Strain mixture into a small saucepan through a fine strainer; discard solids. Add gelatin mixture to pan; cook, stirring, over medium heat until gelatin dissolves. Pour mixture into a prepared pan. Chill until set, about 2 hours.

③ Make the shiso gelée: Purée lemon juice, salt, shiso, and 6 tbsp. ice-cold water in a blender. Strain mixture into a saucepan through a fine strainer; discard solids. Add gelatin mixture to saucepan; cook over medium heat until gelatin dissolves. Pour mixture into a prepared pan; cover with plastic wrap. Chill until set, about 2 hours.

④ Make the ponzu gelée: Heat ponzu and gelatin mixture in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring, until gelatin dissolves. Remove from heat; pour mixture into the last prepared pan. Chill until set, about 2 hours.

⑤ To serve, release each gelée from its pan by sliding a knife along edge. Cut each gelée into $\frac{1}{4}$ " squares; chill. Garnish each oyster with gelée cubes.

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Meet New York City's most flamboyant culinary explorer

BY INDRANI SEN

ON AN OCTOBER NIGHT last year, in a junkyard in New York City's South Bronx, I watched a bizarre scene unfold. Hissing flames burst from a pile of wrecked cars. Jamaican carnival dancers in sequined bikinis gyrated. And a pomaded man in a white tuxedo held a flaming leg of jerk chicken while gazing maniacally into a video camera. Then he took a swig of grain alcohol and blew a cloud of orange fire. Some of the flaming liquid dribbled onto his collar and was doused frantically by an assistant. "That's a wrap!" the man in the tuxedo announced.

The man was Justin Fornal, a 32-year-old filmmaker who calls himself Baron Ambrosia. He was shooting an episode of *Bronx Flavor*, his hugely popular public-access cable show. I'm a devoted fan. (You can watch archived episodes at www.bronxflavor.com.) In the show, the Baron—part Edwardian dandy, part 1970s pimp—traipses through the Bronx, acting out wild story lines that center on one or another of the borough's many immigrant cuisines. The first episode I saw was about the Puerto Rican fried-pork snacks known as *cuchifritos*; it was titled "Cuchifritos of Love" and chronicled the Baron's quest for a long-lost paramour named Desperado, played by a real-life *cuchifritos* counter server. The pyrotechnics I witnessed in the junkyard were for "The Bling of Fire," an episode about jerk chicken.

I'd tracked down Fornal a few months earlier, determined to find out more about the creator of my favorite food program. What interested me the most wasn't his showbiz antics, in fact, but his sincere curiosity about food—he manages to weave an education into the drama,

using maps and cheesy video graphics to trace the provenance of, say, a Garifuna root tonic back to Nigeria. I also admired his love for the Bronx, a largely working-class enclave where one in three residents is foreign-born. Fornal, I realized, is not so much a self-promoter as he is a civic booster, perhaps the most spectacular ambassador the borough has ever had, aside



Justin Fornal, a.k.a. Baron Ambrosia, presents a flaming dish of jerk chicken on his cable television program, *Bronx Flavor*.

from the Yankees. He wants you to know that the Guyanese, Dominican, Albanian, Haitian, and other kinds of restaurants on his show are the city's purest expressions of immigrant cuisine. "These restaurants have to be the genuine article," Fornal told me when I met him, "because these are not people saying, 'Let's do Thai tonight.'"

That first encounter with Fornal—one of several visits we made to restaurants he was scouting for future episodes—began in the

parking lot of a Burger King near Van Cortlandt Park. When I arrived, he was dressed in a purple satin waistcoat, purple silk shirt, and white fedora and was leaning against his car, which I recognized from the show: a replica of a 1923 open-top Mercedes roadster painted mauve and outfitted with a small chandelier that he'd rigged to hang over the backseat. As Fornal drove us to our destination—a Guyanese joint featured in a Bollywood-inspired episode called "The Roti Express"—he chatted with me and waved at pedestrians who'd stopped to stare at his ride; at one point he got out to talk with some curious teenagers and hand out flyers for his show. As he told me about his life—he is the son of a schoolteacher and a dental technician—Fornal sounded nothing like his onscreen persona. "It's just being curious about other people's cultures," he said matter-of-factly when I asked him what motivates him to be the Baron.

On one of our last outings together, Fornal took me to a Jamaican steam-table restaurant called the Best of the Best, where he wanted to interview the co-owner, a matronly woman named Yvonne, about her jerk chicken for "The Bling of Fire." As I breakfasted on ackee (a Jamaican fruit) and saltfish, Fornal flirted with Yvonne, trying to cajole her into appearing on camera. "You're beautiful," he said in his campy onscreen voice. "You can't hide from the camera! Talk about the jerk. The essence of the jerk!" He got his interview.

Exploring the Bronx with Fornal, I started to see magic and beauty in a part of the city I'd generally thought to have little of either. And that's really the point of what the Baron does. "It's about making people take a second look at where they live," he told me one day, "and realizing that there's excitement all around." 🐦

INDRANI SEN's most recent story for *SAVEUR* was "Greener Giant" (April 2009).

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SOURCE

Baker's Pride

A treasure trove of Greek pastries

BY BEN MIMS

I'VE GOT THE BIGGEST SWEET tooth of anyone I know, so when I first walked into the Artopolis bakery in Astoria, a largely Greek neighborhood in Queens, New York, it was love at first sight. There were ten different kinds of baklava alone, some studded with walnuts, pistachios, or coconut, others drizzled with white and dark chocolate. Arrayed in glass cases next to the baklava were all sorts of sweets I hadn't seen before: honey-drenched fried-dough rounds called *toulumbes*; folded pastry fritters called *diples*; soft, ring-shaped biscuits called *koulouria* that were flavored with orange, sesame, cinnamon, or ouzo; and on and on. Over many visits, I've learned a bit about these treats and developed some favorites, such as *kritsini*, savory twisted breadsticks, traditionally made in Crete, that are flavored with red wine, and moist *melomakarona*, orange-flavored, honey-dipped cookies that are often served at Greek weddings. And I can never leave without a bag of *kourabiedes*, the country's national cookie: crumbly crescent-shaped shortbreads spiked with brandy and covered with confectioners' sugar.

With time, I've gotten to know one of the owners, Regina Katopodis, a Greek-American who grew up in Brooklyn and, as a young woman, lived for 15 years on the Greek island of Ithaca. During her time in Greece, she traveled the country seeking out bakers with the best recipes for traditional desserts. When she moved back to New York in 2001, she brought those recipes with her and spent three months perfecting them with her staff at Artopolis before they opened their doors in 2003.

Katopodis continues to oversee all the baking herself, making sure it's done with the utmost precision. "When you live in Greece, you can go through all the stages of life in a day: you go to a funeral in the morning, the beach in the afternoon, and then maybe a birthday party at night," she said. "And these pastries are present at every special moment in life, so they have to be the best." Prices for the Artopolis bakery's sweets range from \$10 to \$15 per pound, plus shipping. Call 718/728-8484 or visit www.artopolis.net.





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A young Masai tribesman near
Olangaiet, Kenya.

ESSAY

Rite of Passage

Sharing a meal with Kenya's Masai warriors

BY SHANE MITCHELL

JUST AFTER BREAKFAST in a village near the Loita Mountains, on the border between Kenya and Tanzania, a roving band of lanky teenagers, decked in beads and armed to the teeth with spears and machetes, approached me while I was seated alone in the back of a Land Rover. At first, one boy's head popped up to check his reflection in the car window. Then two more. Finally, eight were bunched outside the car, peering in at me.

"Original Masai," claimed one, whose tightly woven braids and handsome face were smeared red with henna paste. He perched his forearms on the base of the rear window and leaned into the vehicle.

"Give me money," he requested, grinning.

"Honey, you've got to be kidding," I said, laughing. "Try harder."

With that, we understood each other, even though my Maa was as limited as his English. His name was Kipalunga, he told me with a jut of his chin. He was at the stage in life when Masai males are allowed to adorn themselves handsomely, roam unsupervised by elders, steal cattle, and flirt with girls. It's their version of spring break but with sharp weapons. My translator, a Masai junior elder named William Olesiara, had cautioned me to avoid these potentially lethal young men, but he was off somewhere conversing with other herdsman. Despite that advice, I soon was cheerfully examining their carved wooden clubs as they swatted flies with my hand fan.

I knew that Masai warriors, called *moran* in Kiswahili, can be secretive eaters. Men from puberty to their thirties are regulated by restrictive traditional laws about the killing and consumption of meat. But sometimes, Olesiara had told me, being *mzungu*, or white, means

it's possible to plead certain "stupidities" as to what is acceptable or not, like whether a woman can attend a guarded ritual. I offered to buy a sheep if Kipalunga and his gang would permit me to join them during the slaughter. It was a tempting invitation for nomadic herders who, if they're lucky, eat once a day.

There was a huddle at a distance, with much negotiation in both Maa and Kiswahili. Then Olesiara came back to the car to let me know that the *moran* would make an exception for me. "After all," he said with a shy smile, "you are *mzungu*."

The slaughter took place later that afternoon, in a parched valley away from the boys' village, at an improvised *olpul*, or meat-eating camp. I've never seen an animal deconstructed with such grace. Two of the *moran* smothered the sheep by gently laying it down on a bed of twigs and kneeling on its rib cage while clamping its mouth and nose closed. The sheep's eyes stilled as the boys offered a murmured prayer thanking the animal for its life. They slit the throat and allowed the blood to pool in a pouch they'd improvised by stretching the neck skin. Then, one by one, the young men leaned down to drink, their hennaed faces suddenly a shade more crimson. Using machetes, they skinned and gutted the sheep and separated the legs from the hip bones with a swift backward snap.

Kipalunga sliced into the milky white intestines and dropped them in a curled mass on the hide, which lay hair side down on the dirt. Several pounds of masticated greenery, still damp with bile, were extracted from the stomach. The tallest warrior hung the veined caul on a shrub. It billowed in the wind and dried like parchment. He then shredded it into a pot of water, dumped in the organs and some resinous branches of a prickly acacia, and set the pot to simmer on the cook fire. Olesiara, adjusting the red floral *kanga* cloth wrapped around his waist,

explained to me that this broth is prized for its medicinal value because any nutrients the sheep consumed are transferred to its cooks. Chunks of fat were tossed into another pot to fry; the head was roasted on a stick, then cracked to extract the brains.

Usually, when a village consumes one of its herd, the animal's parts are portioned out according to a code: men in their prime are awarded the thighs; women are given the large intestine, neck, and pelvis; elders take the diaphragm and liver. At a male-only *olpul*, the kidneys are eaten raw by the slaughterers. That afternoon, standing next to a tribe member named Parmat, who wore a beaded headpiece with jingling medallions, I watched him eagerly suck the marrow from a cloven hoof attached to a blackened, splintered shin bone.

As others gnawed on the ribs, Parmat handed me a juicy gob of smoky, barely cooked sheep fat the size of my thumbnail. I held it between my fingers, and, as everyone paused suddenly to watch what I would do, it occurred to me that Parmat's gesture meant far more than the polite passing of an hors d'oeuvre. No longer just a witness to this wild feast, I'd been welcomed to the table. I put the fat in my mouth and chewed. And chewed. Emily Post does not address occasions such as this. How else was I going to earn my lamb chops? Swallowing, I nodded curtly and smiled. The *moran* smiled too. Then they handed me more.

In the gathering darkness, we surrounded the blazing fire, wrapping ourselves tightly in tartan red *shuka* blankets. Lightning and a sheet of cold rain advanced along a distant escarpment as the boys sang about their luck in meeting up with someone willing to feed them. Finally, as Olesiara and I prepared to leave, the young men clustered around me once more and, conferring upon me the African honorific for older women, cried, "Mama, Mama." 

SHANE MITCHELL is a SAVEUR contributing editor who lives in upstate New York.

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MEMORIES

Dinners with Jamie

Food and other pleasures in 1970s New York

BY GAIL GREENE



HE KNEW MY WORK. I knew his. It was 1976. I was standing in front of the Brentano's bookstore on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan promoting my novel *Blue Skies, No Candy*. He stopped, picked up the book, read a few lines, and laughed. "Your hero has my name," he said. "Jamie. You're the food writer from *New York* magazine."

"And you're that actor. From those movies." He was young and surprisingly shy, with shiny black curls and perfect posture, even better-looking in person. "You were wonderful in *Misty Beethoven*."

"That was fun to make," he said. "I liked the woman in that one."

"What do you do when you don't like the woman?" I asked.

"I just get myself in the mood." He looked me straight in the eye.

What lusty '70s woman freshly liberated from marriage could possibly resist? This was before sex on video. The Swedish adult film *I Am Curious (Yellow)* had been cleared of obscenity charges. Everyone was talking about *Deep*

Throat, and couples were going to sex cinemas together. I was just an amateur of erotica and wasn't aware that, as a star of *The Private Afternoons of Pamela Mann*, *The Story of Joanna*, and *Through the Looking Glass*, Jamie Gillis was porn's leading man.

Free for dinner? Yes. And dancing after. We danced till two or three in the morning, then walked to his apartment together, hair soaking wet. We stopped at a deli on Eighth Avenue for a grapefruit and the *Times*—a late-night ritual of his, he told me. And it was true: he didn't seem to have a problem getting in the mood.

Later, he told me his story. He was born Jamey Ira Gorman on April 20, 1943. His father named him after the pirate played by Tyrone Power in *The Black Swan*. He graduated with honors in English from Columbia. He was doing Shakespeare Off-Broadway for no money while driving a taxi to make a living when he saw a want ad in the *Village Voice* for a nude model. He found himself making porn "loops" at \$40 an hour, his take-home from a whole day in the cab. "It was easy. Everyone was sweet. And I loved the sex." He marveled that he was being paid to sleep with dewy young girls. He was the happiest man I'd ever met.

I knew from the start that Jamie had a complicated other life, a girlfriend, naughty-boy diversions. I was determined to spoil him for all that. I took him to the Four Seasons and The Palace. He looked dashing in the brown pin-striped suit he'd gotten from the costume rack on the set of *Misty*. He liked to wear a shiny floral tie that still had a strip of masking tape on the back labeled "orgy scene."

Jamie was 33 years old and hungry. He was fascinated with tasting new tastes. I bought him a bag of passion fruits at Fauchon, and he proceeded to eat them all. Sorbets could never be too tart. Meat had to be rare. Wine had to be red. He quickly developed a yen for Château d'Yquem, the pricey French dessert wine. He was insatiable. His dream, he said, clearly serious, was to invent a fruit.

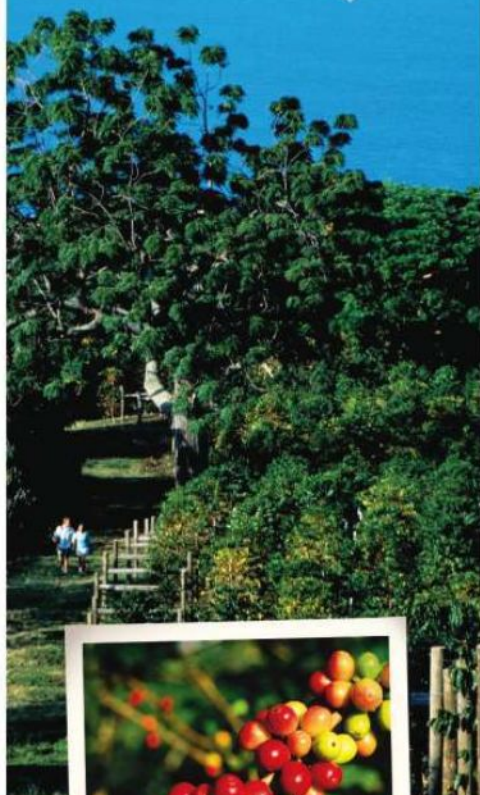
I was fascinated by him. At Brussels Restaurant, where he

GAIL GREENE, the former restaurant critic for *New York* magazine, is the author of *Insatiable: Tales from a Life of Delicious Excess* (Warner Books, 2006).

Chicken livers à la Gael, above (see page 52 for a recipe).

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asked me to take him for his birthday, the appetizer of brains, sweetbreads, truffle, and bean sprouts on red leaf lettuce seemed to knock him out. "It reminds me of the French director Artaud," he said. "A dizzying immersion in spectacle." Lines like that were his gifts to me.

At times such discoveries would move him to tears. Then he would wipe his eyes and smile. "That felt good," he would say. At Restaurant Girardet, outside of Lausanne, which we visited on our first overseas trip together, he wept over a fish whose flesh was pale pink, moist, and as soft as a ripe peach. It had to be salmon, but no salmon I'd ever tasted had quite that astonishing mouth-feel. Tears were falling down Jamie's cheeks. "If there's a heaven, this is what they'll serve the good kids," he said.

He could never resist a gourmand adventure. The Box Tree Inn in Westchester County once sent a Rolls-Royce to pick us up so I could write about the experience for *New York*. The homeless man in front of Jamie's building cheered as we pulled away. Jamie was indignant the food wasn't more wonderful. Later, in our room upstairs, he put on my lacy black silk nightgown and stood in front of the tall mirror with his unlit pipe in his mouth. "I look good in anything," he said to his image.

One afternoon on our way to my house near Woodstock, New York, the van I had borrowed went off the road, landing upside down and scattering all the delicacies I'd brought for the weekend across the weedy slope. Drivers stopped to pull us from the wreckage.

"Find the quail," Jamie said as soon as he realized he was alive. We collected our groceries as best we could, and a friend drove us home. I ran water in the tub, and while Jamie was soaking I fetched a bottle of Lafite Rothschild from the cellar. He came out wrapped in a towel and studied the label approvingly. "The sour cream disappeared," he said mournfully. "Will the chicken livers be all right without sour cream?" I assured him they would.

"And look, the brownies survived," I said.

We carried dinner trays to the fireplace, sipping the Lafite from Baccarat goblets. "It's thrilling to eat something as tiny as a quail," he said.

Jamie disappeared a year later into the West Coast porn world. But one day about eight years ago he was back. I invited him to my birthday party, where he met Zarela Martinez, the New York City restaurateur. She took him home and he never left. He worked in adult

films into the early 2000s, mostly in nonsexual roles, but announced his retirement at the end of 2002 as a Christmas gift to Zarela.

Jamie had always talked about buying the house he was born in, on West 103rd Street, so he could invite everyone he loved to live there. Zarela gave him the next best thing, opening her East 53rd Street town house to all his friends, to the women he had loved over the years, and to their husbands and mates. Zarela's friends, when they encountered Jamie's intelligence and playfulness, became his friends, too.

In December I got an e-mail from Jamie with the subject line: "Cancer, schmancer."

"Hey Dancing Queen," it began, "I've only recently begun to tell friends and family, but you may have already heard that the Black Swan is expected to be sinking in the near future from a nasty, rare cancer. ... I am emotionally in a very good place (at least so far) and would feel myself ridiculously ungrateful for the great life I have had if I began to complain now. Thanks for all the hee hees. Your Swan, Jamie."

He died on February 19, 2010, at the age of 66.

CHICKEN LIVERS À LA GAEL

SERVES 2-4

This dish (pictured on page 51) is based on one author Gael Greene made for her friend Jamie Gillis.

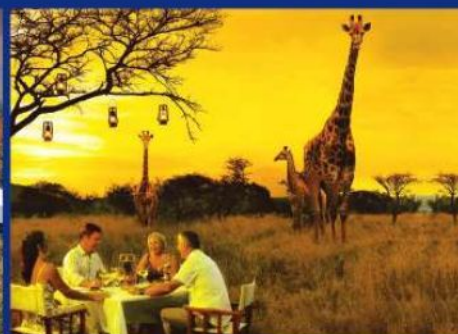
- 1/2 lb. chicken livers, trimmed and lobes separated**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1/4 cup flour**
- 6 tbsp. chilled unsalted butter, cubed**
- 1/2 cup minced onion**
- 1/4 cup chicken broth**
- 1/4 cup white vermouth**
- 1 tbsp. minced chives**
- 1 tbsp. minced parsley**
- Toast points, for serving**
- Sour cream, for serving (optional)**

Season livers with salt and pepper; dredge in flour. Melt 3 tbsp. butter in a 10" skillet over high heat. Add livers and cook, flipping once, until browned, 2-3 minutes. Transfer livers to a plate. Wipe out skillet, add 2 tbsp. butter, and return to high heat. Add onions; cook until caramelized, 4-5 minutes. Add broth and vermouth; cook until reduced by half, about 4 minutes. Remove pan from heat; swirl in chives, parsley, and remaining butter to make a sauce. Return livers to skillet. Season with salt; serve with toast points (and sour cream, if you like).

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A large rectangular carrot cake sits in a dark metal baking pan. The cake is covered in a thick, white cream cheese frosting that has been smoothed out. Six small, realistic-looking edible carrots are placed on the frosting in two rows of three. The cake itself is a deep brown color, visible around the edges of the frosting. The background is a bright blue textured surface.

CLASSIC

Family Favorite

Minimalist or fully loaded, carrot cake rises to the occasion

BY ASHLEY GARTLAND

THERE'S A RULE IN my family: where there is a wedding, there will be carrot cake. At my own wedding, in 2008, I served two—one with raisins, one without—even though my husband professes to hate carrot cake of any kind. I had no choice.

What's odd, given my family's fidelity to this cake, is that none of us can agree on which version is the real deal. Beyond a requisite portion of grated carrot in the batter, the definition is remarkably elastic, and anything from a mildly sweet quick bread to a multilayered, lavishly frosted fantasia might qualify as classic. My mom insists that walnuts equal authenticity; I maintain that golden raisins are an essential mix-in. And my grandfather's wife makes the most elaborate carrot cake of any of us, embellished with pineapple, coconut, and a thick coating of cream cheese frosting.

All of the above are a far cry from the medieval British carrot puddings from which

Spiced carrot layer cake



today's carrot cakes descend. Those steamed and suet-enriched desserts relied on carrots' natural sweetness in an era when cane sugar was costly and frosting as we know it had yet to be invented. By 1783, a cinnamon-spiced carrot tea cake was on the bill of fare at Fraunces Tavern in New York City, but it remained as bare of frosting as its pudding predecessor and contained no fruits or nuts. Recipes for carrot cake published a century and a half later in the *Chicago Daily News Cook Book* (Chicago Daily News, 1930) and *Prudence Penny's Cook-book* (Prentice Hall, 1939) brought walnuts, raisins, and almonds into the mix. Though canned pineapple and packaged shredded coconut had been available to home cooks since the turn of the century, it wasn't until the 1960s that they started lending carrot cakes a tropical twist very much in keeping with the postwar craze for all things Polynesian. It was in the '60s, too, that cream cheese frosting entered the equation, and even with such

ASHLEY GARTLAND is a freelance writer in Portland, Oregon.

a rich topping, many cooks still perceived carrot cake as a healthy dessert. Its popularity soared.

Though every member of my family favors a different recipe, our collective commitment to carrot cake remains sacred and binding. Two years ago, faced with a groom who refused to eat it, I finally acquiesced to the following prenuptial agreement regarding our wedding reception: we'd serve a dozen small cakes of varying flavors, no fewer than two of them carrot cakes. It wouldn't have felt like a wedding without them.

CLASSIC CARROT CAKE

SERVES 12-14

This version of the cake (pictured on page 55) is a potluck and bake sale favorite; the addition of crushed pineapple helps to keep it sweet and moist.

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup canola oil, plus more for pan
- 2 cups flour, plus more for pan
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup buttermilk

- 3 tsp. vanilla extract
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups finely grated carrots
- 1 cup canned crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
- 1 cup sweetened flaked coconut
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 3 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
- Marzipan carrots for garnish (see page 117 for a recipe)

1 Heat oven to 350°. Grease and flour a 9" x 13" baking dish; set aside. In a bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt; set aside. In a bowl, whisk together oil, sugar, buttermilk, 2 tsp. vanilla, and eggs; whisk into flour. Stir in carrots, pineapple, nuts, coconut, and raisins. Pour batter into prepared dish; smooth. Bake for 40-45 minutes. Let cool.

2 In a bowl, beat cream cheese and butter with a hand mixer until smooth. Add remaining vanilla and confectioners' sugar; beat until fluffy. Spread icing over cake; refrigerate. Garnish with marzipan carrots, if using.

SPICED CARROT LAYER CAKE

SERVES 16-20

Orange juice and zest, cinnamon, and ginger add verve and depth to this sumptuous cake (pictured above).

FOR THE CAKE:

- 1 cup unsalted butter, plus more for pans
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups flour, plus more for pans
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups whole wheat flour
- 1 tbsp. baking powder
- 1 tbsp. baking soda
- 1 tbsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground allspice
- 1 cup sweetened flaked coconut
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely ground almonds
- 3 cups finely grated carrots
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups packed dark brown sugar
- 3 eggs, separated
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain yogurt

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup orange juice
- 1 tbsp. orange zest
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

FOR THE GLAZE AND ICING:

- 12 tbsp. unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup buttermilk
- 1 tbsp. light corn syrup
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. baking soda
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mascarpone cheese
- 3 8-oz. packages cream cheese
- 2 tbsp. dark or spiced rum
- 1 tbsp. orange zest
- 1 1-lb. box confectioners' sugar
- 2 cups finely chopped walnuts

1 Make cake: Heat oven to 350°. Butter and flour three 9" round baking pans; set aside. Heat butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat; cook until it browns. Chill until solid.

2 In a bowl, whisk together flours, baking powder and soda, cinnamon, ginger, salt, and allspice. Finely grind coconut and almonds in a food processor. Combine nut mixture, carrots, and flour mixture; mix. In a bowl, beat together browned butter and brown sugar until fluffy, 1-2 minutes; beat in yolks one at a time. Add yogurt, juice, zest, and vanilla; beat. Add flour mixture; beat. Whisk egg whites to stiff peaks; fold into batter. Divide batter between pans; smooth tops with a spatula. Bake for 30-35 minutes. Let cool slightly.

3 Meanwhile, make glaze and icing: In a 4-qt. pan, combine 4 tbsp. butter, sugar, buttermilk, syrup, and baking soda; boil. Cook until dark, 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla. Spread glaze over each warm cake. Remove cakes from pans; transfer, glazed side up, to racks. Let cool.

4 In a bowl, beat remaining butter, mascarpone, and cream cheese with a mixer until smooth. Add remaining vanilla, rum, zest, and sugar; beat. Chill. Spread $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups icing evenly over 2 cake layers; stack, top with remaining layer. Frost top and sides; press nuts onto sides. Chill before serving.



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GLORIES OF GREECE

It is the cradle of Mediterranean cuisine, a place that embodies everything we love about cooking and eating: a passion for pure ingredients like olive oil and wild herbs and fresh-caught fish, a respect for tradition and feasting, and an honest way with food that lets bold flavors sing. From the mountains of Epirus in the west to sun-drenched Crete in the south, Greece is a modern marvel with ancient roots. —*The Editors*



Fabled Feta

Greeks are particular about their feta. Some like theirs soft and mild; others prefer it hard and crumbly. Some crave a pungent, chèvre-like flavor, others a lemony-sour tang. Traditionally, feta has been made by shepherds from the milk of sheep and goats that graze on grasses native to a particular valley, plain, or mountain range—which gives the animals' milk, and the cheese made from it, a distinctive regional flavor. Most feta is still made in small dairies, which buy milk from nearby farmers. The cheese makers scoop the curds into metal molds to drain overnight; in the morning they sprinkle the blocks of young cheese with salt and stack them in a wooden barrel or tin container. The container is then topped off with whey and stored for 60 days so that the cheese can mature. When I buy feta, I keep it in the fridge, submerged in brine. I often doctor the brine to adjust the flavor of the cheese—if it's very salty I store it in plain water to temper the salinity; if it's very sharp I add a little milk. Like many Greeks, I use feta at just about every meal, adding it to salads, stuffing it into pies, and crumbling it on stews. And I usually leave a generous slice of feta on the table all afternoon, to be nibbled on during the long hours between lunch and dinner. —Daphne Zepos

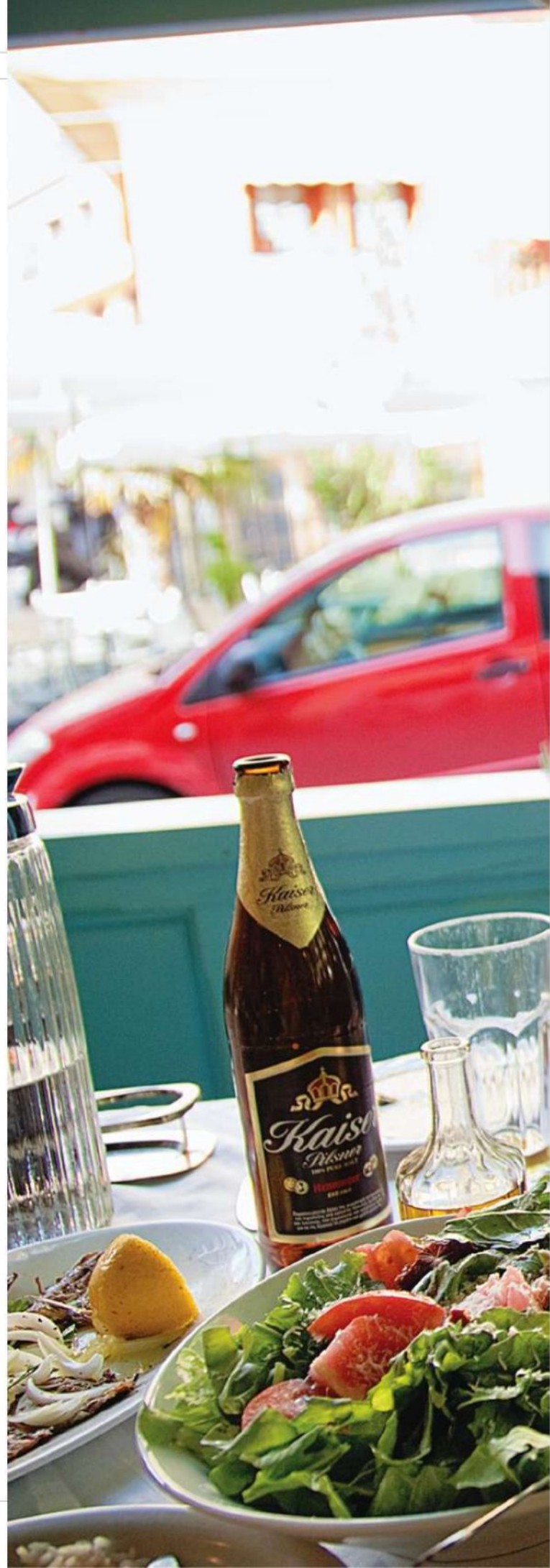
WHEN I WAS A GRADUATE student, I lucked into an anthropological study that would take me to the fountain-head of European culture, Greece. There, I would dive into a 6,000-year-old cultural continuum, with principles of governance laid down by Plato, science by Aristotle, poetry by Sappho. I was in scholarly bliss. As a child I'd played Aphrodite and Artemis with my dolls. I'd read *Gods, Graves and Scholars: The Story of Archaeology* when I was 12. Only, little did I realize, when I elected to do that study, that I'd get to relish all that history in an entirely new way.

I would eat it.

Plunging into the many millennia of Greek civilization is like biting through the layers of a phenomenal baklava, which is essentially what I've been doing for the 30 years or so that I've been living, cooking, and working in Greece. On that inaugural trip, the first meal that I was served by my welcoming landlord in the village where I settled, a porridge of yellow lentils lavished with a serpentine pour of verdant olive oil and sprinkled with wild capers, took me to the bottom strata of that edible history, for it smacked of the Minoans and their precursors. The mysterious Minoans were among the first residents of Greece. When they arrived, around 2700 B.C., they brought with them domesticated grains, sheep, and goats. They adopted the almonds, the nuts of the mastic bush, and the yellow pulses that were being cultivated by more-ancient peoples already living in Greece, and they found wild grapes, from which they made wine. They also discovered a bitter native berry they began to cure and press. The resulting edible, the olive, and its liquid lucre, olive oil, became the economic foundation of their civilization.

On my second night in Greece all those years ago, my new neighbors and I devoured a dish of crisp honey-eyed fritters, called *loukoumades*, that evoked the arrival of Greece's next inhabitants: a people who had strayed from their homeland near the Ural Mountains and who spoke an Indo-European dialect that we now know to be ancient Greek. The Greeks drove cattle before them, and on their carts they ferried the most venerated food of their native land: honey, as well as the bees to produce it. They added those foods to the pantry of the Minoans and expanded the local larder further. The Greeks invented bread and soon contrived a hundred different kinds. They developed wine as none had before, evolving varietals and marking each amphora, the clay vessels used for storing the drink, with year and origin. They cultivated orchards of fruit and nut trees, husbanded swine, goats, sheep, and cows, and raised poultry, from (continued on page 64)

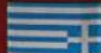
A variety of mezedes, right, including gigante beans (bottom right), at Tsinari, an ouzeri in the northern city of Thessaloniki. Previous page, a Greek salad (see page 108 for a recipe). Following pages, from left: brined goat cheese for sale in Thessaloniki; grilled sardines from Marathi, a fishing village in Crete.





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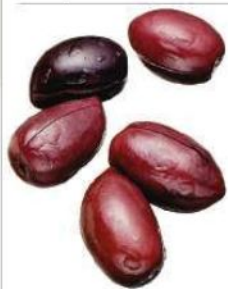
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Mighty Olive

No olives are as famous as kalamatas, the sweet, meaty, purple-black fruits that are tossed into salads around the world. Kalamatas are named for the port city in the Peloponnese from which the olives have been shipped for export for centuries, and although the variety now grows across Greece (350 million trees yield fruit every year), that region remains the country's largest producer. Unlike Greece's *koro-neiki* olives, which are raised for oil, kalamatas are meant for the table; they're baked in breads, turned into spreads, and eaten as *meze*. The best come from the town of Sellasia, where the trees grow in the foothills of Parnonas Mountain. Here, the minerality of the soil, spare irrigation, and cool nights result in kalamatas with a concentrated richness. They are cured in brine to mellow their bitterness, then packed in a brine with red wine vinegar for shipping. Though it's traditional to slit the olives to allow the brine to soak in, some growers nowadays are forgoing the slicing to keep the olives firm. A second-generation kalamata grower, Anastasia Kanelloupolou, suggests that the best way to keep kalamatas after buying them is to drain the tart liquid and store them in olive oil to preserve their sweetness.

—Betsy Andrews

(continued from page 60) chickens to swans. They grew an abundance of vegetables and gathered myriad greens. Fish became so essential to their diet that they came to know exactly which inlet contained the best of each species. They enhanced dishes with wild oregano and sage and imported cinnamon and pepper. They invented games of strength and prowess for which triumphant athletes won "trophy," a term that in both ancient and modern Greek simply means food.

The Greeks brought their culinary innovations to the regions into which their culture expanded: places we now call Italy, France, Spain, the Levant, North Africa, and India. Then, in 146 B.C., an envious power rising to their west, the Romans, subdued them. The Romans idolized and augmented Greek foods to further flamboyance: from them came the thin phyllo pastry dough used to make spanakopita and sweetened pies, as well as *tiropita*, a cheese turnover. Then came the Ottoman conquerors, who ushered in assorted Central Asian provender like rice pilaf and jellied rose water *loukoum*. In the 1800s, exotic fare began to arrive from the New World: tomatoes, squash, potatoes, and beans, each to be given a Greek inflection.

From the bounty of this potpourri, Greeks have spun a captivating cuisine. Great weavers that they have always been, plaiting wool into tapestry, ideas into philosophy, the Greeks have done the same with their food, merging threads of influence from every era. In stews that hark back to antiquity, they marry savory meats and vegetables in stews laced with mountain herbs. They stuff peppers with everything from cheese to rice, sultana raisins, mint, and nutmeg, each ingredient traceable to a different place of origin. They braise wild game, like rabbit, as did the region's early hunters. Following the model of their classical ancestors, they turn their sun-blessed vegetables into *olios*, or vegetable *mélanges*, so fine and filling that there hardly seems a need for further sustenance. And they fold nuts and fruit into sheets of dough and bathe the pastries in syrups of honey, muscat, citrus, and brandy, a technique imparted by Byzantine chefs.

But, as I learned when I eventually settled down in a little village on Santorini, Greek food not only tells the story of the past; it is also very much a cuisine of the present. Indeed, the Greek way of cooking and eating has endured for so long not because it is preserved in amber but because it has adapted and expanded so nimbly. In so doing, it has inspired the cuisines of other parts of the world. Put simply, the Greek way just makes good sense. The *meze* tradition of feasting on small dishes, which has spread throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East, is a casual, companionable way to eat that suits the human spirit. The inherent healthfulness of Greek meals only adds to their appeal: plenty of olive oil, wild and garden vegetables, plus beans, chickpeas, and other legumes, as well as fish, some dairy, and not too much meat. What's more, Greeks who practice traditional ways of cooking and eating are the living embodiment of the term *locavore*—even today, most

Greeks eat predominantly what's grown nearby, a circumstance necessitated in part by the remoteness of many of the country's regions and islands.

That somewhat fractured geography—Greece comprises two peninsulas surrounded by far-flung islands—has given rise to a fascinating quilt of regional cuisines that are nowhere near as well known around the world as those of, say, Italy or France. From rugged Epirus, in the western mainland, come hearty pies and stews made from the lamb and river eel that thrive there. Macedonia still produces the great wines that Alexander tipped; its capital, Thessaloniki, once held one of the world's largest Jewish populations, and dishes there reflect Sephardic and even earlier Jewish influences. Cool Thrace, in the northeast near Turkey, with the ancient Roman highway running through it, offers barley pilafs and sour-milk noodles, foods introduced by the early Greeks. The vast peninsula known as the Peloponnese—where the Mycenaean civilization, enshrined in Homer's epics, flourished—is famous for roasted goat, rustic breads, and honey. Crete, the island that was the epicenter of Minoan culture, is known for ancient foods like *trahana*, tiny kernels of air-dried yogurt and grain that plump up like couscous

THE GREEK WAY OF COOKING AND EATING HAS ENDURED FOR SO LONG NOT BECAUSE IT IS PRESERVED IN AMBER BUT BECAUSE IT MAKES GOOD SENSE

when boiled. There are the Ionian islands, where specialties like *karithopita*, a walnut cake flavored with cinnamon, attest to years of Venetian rule, and in Athens, that fabled and vibrant metropolis, one can sample the creations of acclaimed contemporary chefs who unite multiple streams of their country's cuisine in inventive ways.

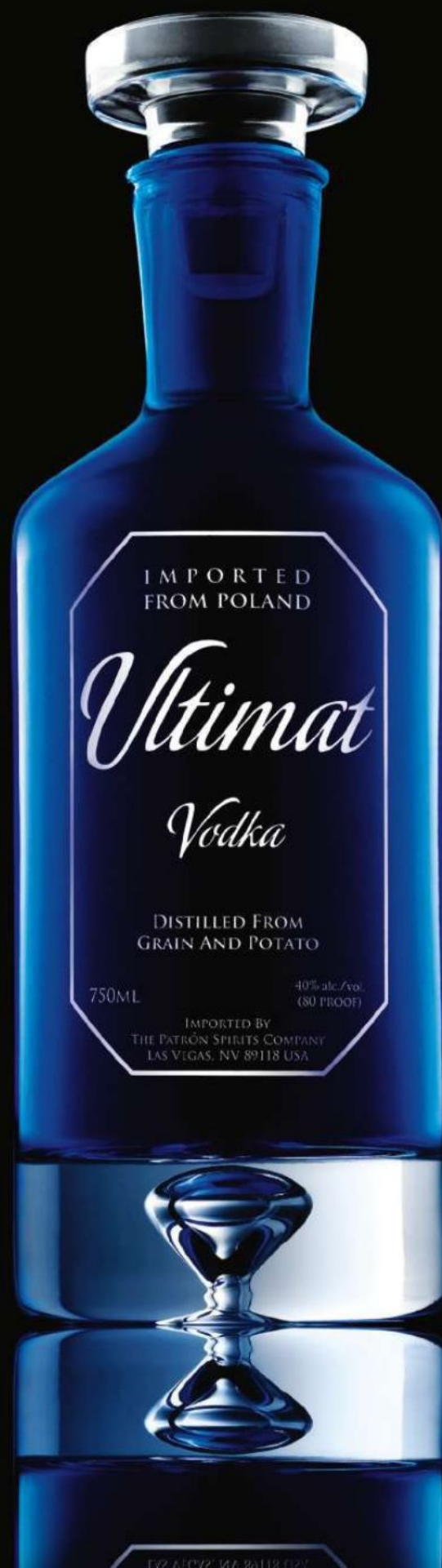
Not only has this regionalism given life to different subsets of Greek cuisine, it has imbued Greeks with a strong sense of local identity and pride. My little village on Santorini is what I consider to be the perfect place to eat and learn and live: there are the ruins of a major Minoan city on the island, a mountaintop into which are carved some of the earliest examples of Greek writing, and farms all around growing grapes, wheat, melons, sesame, and tomatoes. My friends are poets, farmers, workers, and, most of all, cooks: they grill red mullet, dislodge sea urchins, and stew up so many bowls of yellow lentils, topped with everything from tapenade to sardines, that they're teased for it. Capers grow wild and are brined in sea salt. Residents gather wild oregano, thyme, sage, and rue and make their own wine. Every time I return there, I savor those ingredients, the tastes of which first seduced me all those years ago. —Susanna Hoffman, author of *The Olive and the Capers* (Workman, 2004)

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IMMORTAL ISLAND

Crete

This island in the Mediterranean Sea was first settled by the Minoans some 5,000 years ago. Crete has a mild climate well suited to the cultivation of olives, citrus, and grapevines. Cretans produce and consume more extra-virgin olive oil than the people of any other region in Greece, and cooks there rely on the island's profusion of wild herbs, more than on spices, to season their dishes.



Zucchini fritters (see page 108 for a recipe), facing page.

MY FRIEND YIANNIS ECONOMOU, at the wheel of a gravel-spitting Audi Quattro, keeps up a running commentary as we speed south over the island of Crete, passing below the snow-clad heights of Mount Psiloritis, edging along precipitous gorges, sweeping past terraced olive plantations and tiny towns. "That's Ayia Varvara, or St. Barbara," he says, pointing to a village in the distance, "famous for cherries, very small, very sweet, in season just one week a year." We pass a roadside vegetable stand laden with big, jade-green cabbages. "It's famous for those too," Yiannis says. "The cabbages are very tender. And up that road is Gergeri, famous for really great bread." Beyond Gergeri, he says, is the cave where, according to myth, Zeus was born. Or maybe where he died.

Crete is like this: every town, every hilltop, every valley has something special about it, usually something that has to do with food. Here it might be cherries, over there a particularly fine pastry, or a way of lightly smoking vinegar-brined pork, or a special touch with *kolokithokeftedes*, the small zucchini fritters often made with Cretan sheep's milk cheese. It might also be the remains of a town that was exporting notable oil and wine thousands of years ago. Or a cave where a god was born or died.

Like Zeus, Yiannis was born on this blessed isle, the fifth largest in the Mediterranean, although he studied and worked for many years in the United States before returning to run his family's hotels in Iraklion, the island's capital. Like many expatriates, he came back to his birthplace with an exile's sense of the importance of place. Traveling around with Yiannis feels like the culmination

of my decades-long love affair with Crete, once home to the Minoans, those predecessors of the classical Greeks whose civilization still captivates historians. This trip, just one of many I've made here over the years, confirms once and for all in my mind that this land is the very cradle of Mediterranean cuisine, a place where, perhaps more than in any other part of Greece, ancient foodways continue to find their truest expression.

Beyond the history, another thing that makes Cretan food so engaging is the healthfulness of it all. Take the island's fruits and vegetables and wild greens, the fish and shellfish, the sheep's milk cheeses, all of it bathed in the island's wealth of luscious green olive oil, and what you have is a paradigm of every nutritionist's dictum about

IN CRETE, EVERY VALLEY, EVERY HILLTOP HAS ITS SPECIAL INGREDIENTS

the Mediterranean diet. It's no accident that some of the earliest studies of that diet were done in Crete back in the 1960s, when a group of American scientists came here to investigate the relationship between diet and disease. Here was a healthy population, so much so that it was difficult to research heart disease because the incidence was so low. It was a population that lived, it seemed, on olive oil, lots and lots of olive oil, not just drizzled but downright inundating salads, greens, and other foods. And that remains the case today.

Of course, modernity has come to Crete, just as it has to every other Mediterranean land. The coasts and beaches are increasingly lined with cheap *(continued on page 70)*





Crete-style orange cake (see page 110 for a recipe). Facing page, a monk at Kouthoumas monastery in southern Crete.

Worthy Indulgence

The calendar of the Greek Orthodox Church is packed with feast days, which is a good thing if you like food, especially sweets. Over the centuries, home cooks in Greece have developed a diverse repertoire of desserts that includes everything from simple semolina cakes like *revani* to baklava to sumptuous custard desserts. The orange-flavored cake pictured at left, called *portokalopita*, was made by Haroula Daskalakis, a home cook in Crete. In my estimation, it could be the ultimate Greek dessert. It's both crunchy and creamy, tangy and sweet, caramelized and fruity. But as with many Greek foods, its ingredients are as much Middle Eastern as they are European. The crisp phyllo pastry, the semolina-thickened custard, and the delicate sugar syrup—all are hallmarks of Middle Eastern pastry making. Only the lavish amount of olive oil, used instead of the butter typically favored in Turkey or the Arab world, seems to confirm that it is truly Greek. The fact is, a whole category of olive oil-based desserts has evolved in Greece—thanks, once again, to the Orthodox church, which calls for the pious to observe dozens of fast days during which the consumption of meat and animal fats is forbidden. In truth, then, *portokalopita* has as much to do with fasting as it does with feasting, a fact that in no way diminishes its appeal. (For a recipe, see page 110.) —*Diana Farr Louis*





Ancient Flavor

A server at my favorite restaurant in Leonidio, a town in the Peloponnese, brings a tray of shot glasses to our table. My friends consume their drinks in one swallow, but I sip mine. It is sweet with a heady, herbal aroma and a light flavor of pine. I have never tasted anything quite like it. This is my introduction to *mastiha*, a traditional Greek liqueur flavored with mastic, the hardened resin of the mastic tree. Mastic is a little bit of wonder. Thanks to a combination of climate, soil, and careful cultivation, the Greek island of Chios is the only place in the world where the tree exudes its aromatic resin—hence mastic’s Greek nickname, “tears of Chios.” Raw mastic can be crushed and mixed with salt to flavor savory dishes or with sugar for sweets. Mastic imparts its flavor to Easter and Christmas breads, spoon sweets (jams), and various confections. Today, the resin is experiencing a renaissance of sorts and can be found in gourmet ice creams and fine chocolates. The techniques used to harvest mastic haven’t changed much since the days of old. Farmers on Chios carve incisions into the tree and allow the sap to seep onto the bark and eventually harden into droplets that fall to the ground like so many tears. —Alexis Marie Adams

(continued from page 66) hotels catering to package tours and restaurants that serve hamburgers, pizza, and fish-and-chips. But push your way up the coast, away from the resort towns, or head into the mountains, and the old Crete is there: in the aromatic smoke from a wood-burning oven in which crusty bread and *paximadia*, Cretan twice-baked barley loaves, known as rusks, are browning; in the sight of a woman collecting wild greens from a rocky hillside for her family’s lunch; in a bowl of soup made with *trahana*, the pasta of crushed wheat and sour milk, mixed together and dried in the sun; in the cries of goats perched on what appear to be insurmountable hills; and in the shouts of a fisherman bringing in his small harvest from nets he set the night before.

On this most recent trip to Crete, I’ve spent two weeks discovering and rediscovering the charms of the place. “It’s not Greece,” Cretans have kept insisting, and in a sense they are right: life here is old-fashioned. But in another sense, Crete is the quintessence of Greece, where Greek food traditions are represented with a special intensity and plenitude. I went up to Anopolis, a village on the heights above the Libyan Sea that is famous for its *graviera* cheese (which looks like Swiss Gruyère but is made of sheep’s milk). I sought out the legendary sisters who run the Dome Hotel in the town of Chania, where I had breakfasted years ago on the most amazingly thick yogurt topped with the sisters’ own rose-

“CRETE IS NOT GREECE,” I’M TOLD, AND YET THE ISLAND IS ALSO THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE COUNTRY

petal jam. I visited street markets in that coastal town of Chania, looking for all the varieties of greens—*radiki* (dandelion greens), *lapatho* (sorrel, which is used like grape leaves to wrap around a savory rice filling), *maratho* (wild fennel, a flavoring as ubiquitous here as dill is in other parts of Greece), wiry wild asparagus, and on and on. And I traveled to Zakros, on the far eastern edge of the island, to visit the olive oil cooperative there in order to remind myself of the oil’s remarkably smooth and flavorful character.

In the town of Kritsa on the eastern part of the island, I met a jolly woman named Anna Kokkini, who has organized a club of cooks to preserve local recipes and food traditions. She served me her own *kalitsounia*, dainty cheese pies made for Easter, and showed me how to make the local version of lasagna: thin little squares of pasta rolled on a skewer to look like handmade penne or *garganelli*, utterly unlike anything called lasagna in Italy. (It’s worth noting that the word *lasagne* actually derives from the ancient Greek word *laganon*, for a type of unleavened bread. In fact, after years of research and exploration,

I have pretty much concluded that Greece is as good a candidate for the title “birthplace of pasta” as Italy or the Arab world.)

And now, with Yiannis Economou and his Audi, I zoom farther inland to Stoli, a little town on the edge of the fertile Messara Valley where a family he knows raises 400 head of sheep and makes cheese. The route takes us across the valley’s broad plain and then past rolling hills studded with silvery olive trees, freshly turned fields glowing deep reddish brown in the April sunlight, and villages marked by a church’s bright round dome, painted white or blue, the colors of the Greek flag. In the distance, the bleached limestone crags of the Asterousia Mountains wall off the valley to the south.

“There are two cultures here,” Yiannis explains as we drive, “the mountain culture of the shepherds and the plains culture of farmers.” Shepherds are meat and dairy eaters, he says, while farmers eat mostly vegetables and legumes. “But here in Stoli the two come together.” The Daskalakis family have been shepherders for too many generations to count, and while sheep are their economic mainstay, they also, like most farmers here, make their own olive oil and wine, grow their own vegetables, and even collect salt down on the south coast to use in their cheese making.

When we get to the Daskalakises’ farm, 120 acres of rolling green hills, we are welcomed by Antonis, the 50-year-old cousin of the three brothers who run the operation. Antonis is in charge of the cheese, and he’s just started to make a batch. Working over an outdoor gas ring, he heats sheep’s milk he collected that morning in a deep metal pan and then stirs in salt and rennet. Slowly and patiently, he breaks up the curd until the grains are rice-size. Pressed and aged, this will become a dense, firm cheese called *kefalotyro* that they make for the family’s use; it’ll be added to pies and eaten as a table cheese. The whey left over will be heated with more milk to make *myzithra*, a ricotta-like cheese that’s often soured to produce a tart, delicious spread called *xinomyzithra*—excellent crumbled over crushed tomatoes on crunchy rusks for the Cretan specialty called *dakos*.

As the cheese is being made, a splendid meal is in the offing. Roasting in a wood-fired outdoor oven, and giving off the most seductive aroma, are cuts of young lamb that have been massaged with *staka*, a rich clotted cream made from ewes’ milk. Finally, Garifalia Daskalakis, the matriarch of the family, beckons us to a table laid out in the living room. On it rests a cornucopia of delicacies, including more lamb braised with tiny wild artichokes, *boubouristi* (snails stewed with rosemary and wine), a rabbit *stifado* cooked with prunes and loads of pearl onions, and more. It is too much, all agree, but we tuck in happily. Old Zeus, up there in his cave watching over us, must be envious as he sips his thin nectar and ambrosia. —Nancy Harmon Jenkins, author of *The New Mediterranean Diet Cookbook* (Bantam, 2008)

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MODERN CLASSIC

Pastitsio is the Greek comfort food par excellence: a layered casserole of macaroni and ground beef, veal, or lamb with cinnamon-scented tomato sauce, topped with a creamy béchamel enriched with cheese. But it isn't as Greek as you might think. Unlike the seasonal dishes that are the foundation of Greek cuisine, pastitsio as we know it today is actually a French-influenced dish that first appeared in the early 20th century. It is the invention of Nikolaos Tselementes, the French-trained Greek chef who authored Greece's most popular cookbook of all time, *Greek Cookery*, first published in 1910. Tselementes's adaptations of traditional dishes—often radical, as he was introducing classical French technique to age-old recipes—fundamentally changed the taste of modern Greek food. He detested garlic and most spices, which he considered a hateful reminder of the Ottoman occupation, and he thought olive oil too heavy. Longing for the creamy sauces of France, he turned again and again to a béchamel of flour, butter, and milk, adding it to dishes like pastitsio and mousaka, the eggplant casserole. Many Greek home cooks in the early 1900s felt Tselementes's book was all a household needed to leave the provincial Eastern Mediterranean past behind and step into the glorious European 20th century.

That is not to say that older versions of pastitsio didn't exist before the book was published. There are actually a number of regional antecedents to the modern dish, all of which were made with a pastry crust. (The name *pastitsio* derives from an old word for pie.) My mother recalls a heated argument between my grandmother and my aunt over which pastitsio was better: my grandmother's traditional macaroni pie enclosed in phyllo, or my aunt's Tselementes-style one, which dispensed with the phyllo in favor of a sumptuous béchamel. My mother went with the more modern version, even going so far as to do away with the careful layering of the ingredients and, instead, simply mixing everything together. It didn't look as elegant as Tselementes probably would have liked, but we all loved it. Today, I make my own version using a combination of lean ground veal and a smoky sausage produced near my home on the Aegean island of Kea. And cooks continue to update and refine the dish all the time. The version pictured at right has well-defined layers of meat sauce, béchamel, and pasta—in this case, long, hollow noodles designed specifically for pastitsio. There's also an egg yolk added to the béchamel to give it a custardy texture. It all adds up to a beautiful, satisfying dish. (See page 106 for a recipe.) —Aglai Kremezi







THE FLAVORS OF A CITY



IT'S EASY TO LOSE YOUR BEARINGS in Thessaloniki. Greece's second city, the capital of the northern region of Macedonia, is really multiple cities built on top of one another. Around every corner you find yourself at the threshold of another era: the ruined Roman market, the crenellated Byzantine city walls, the domed roofs of Ottoman bathhouses, all pressing up against the souvlaki joints and the Benetton stores and the modern apartment blocs.

I've come to Thessaloniki because I've been told it's Greece's culinary capital, with an eclectic cuisine reflecting the proximity of Bulgaria and the other Balkan states (due north) and Turkey (to the east) as well as the city's key position on long-established trade routes between the Middle East and Europe. But I've arrived in the city during the afternoon siesta, and there are few signs of life in the Ano Poli (Upper City), a warren of wooden houses on a steep hillside. Here and there I catch a view of the city center down below, the ships gliding in and out of its port, and the Thermaic Gulf glimmering to the horizon. Finally, I come upon Tsinari, an old Turkish coffeehouse turned *ouzeri*—a place to linger for hours over tiny carafes of anise-flavored *ouzo* or the grappa-like spirit *tsipouro*, along with a steady procession of *mezedes*, or small dishes. At the table next to mine, a group of friends—appliance repairmen, they tell me, who've just finished work for the day—chat, smoke, refill each others' glasses, and occasionally judge that the time is right to order another round of *sardeles stin schara* (grilled butterflied sardines) or *loukaniko* (pork sausage flavored with leek and orange).

Over the next few days, I canvas the city on foot, stopping at restaurants and tavernas whenever I'm hungry, and soon I realize that Thessaloniki is full of places that have focused for generations on doing one or two things very well. For the sweet, cream-filled phyllo triangle known as a *trigona*, for example, everyone goes to Trigona Elenidis. At a lunch counter called Vomvidia, in the city's central Modiano Market, I see a mostly male clientele lining up for oblong, cumin-spiced meatballs called *soutzoukakia*. They come charred and smoky on a square of butcher paper along with a hunk of crusty bread, a thick slab of feta, and a long pale-green pepper also blackened on the grill. As I eat, an avuncular counterman explains to me that Vomvidia means Little Bombs. "Not bombs like you drop on Iraq," he says with a raised eyebrow, and then proceeds to start needling another customer.

It's in Modiano, and in the adjoining Kapani Market, that the most intensive part of my initiation into the city's food culture begins. Moving through row after row of stalls and small shops, I begin constructing my mental catalogue of local ingredients. To name a few: pickled cabbage, which I learn is used in this part of the country in place of grape leaves for wintertime *dolmades* (rice-stuffed leaves); *pastourma*, pastrami-like cured beef rubbed with a paste of fenugreek, cumin, and paprika that's also eaten in Turkey and across the Balkans; and the fleshy, sweet red peppers grown around the town of Florina, in northwest Macedonia.

One evening while wandering around Modiano, I gravi-

Macedonia

The northern region of Macedonia, of which Thessaloniki is the capital city, remained under Ottoman rule until 1913, almost a century longer than the southern part of Greece, and today the region's food reflects a distinctive confluence of Middle Eastern and European traditions: butter and chiles (both hot and sweet) feature prominently in local dishes, and spices like cumin and cinnamon tend to be used more lavishly than in regions to the south.



A cook grills souvlaki (see page 106 for a recipe), succulent pieces of marinated pork eaten wrapped in pita.



Daily Dish

The fragrant skillet-braised chicken called *kotopoulo me dendrolivano*, pictured at left, is a mainstay in the repertoire of home cooks all over Greece. To me, this is Greek home cooking at its best: maximum flavor extracted from a handful of simple ingredients. Oregano is the herb typically used, but the substitution of rosemary here only underlines the easygoing adaptability that gives the dish its wide appeal. First, whole chicken legs are dredged in flour and nestled in a skillet to brown in olive oil. Then a few sprigs of fresh rosemary and a couple of bay leaves go into the skillet along with a glassful of white wine, followed, a few minutes later, by a cup or two of water. And then there's nothing left to do but cover the skillet and leave the chicken to cook until it's fall-off-the-bone tender and infused with the fragrance of the herbs. The sauce in the bottom of the pan more or less makes itself; a generous squeeze of lemon juice at the end is all it needs to really sing. I learned to make this dish in the northern city of Thessaloniki, from a cook named Aglaia Patronaki, who serves it with a fluffy rice pilaf; in another part of Greece, it might come to the table with a side of mashed or fried potatoes. But with a dish this accommodating, you can't go too wrong serving it with whatever you happen to have in your pantry or your refrigerator on a given evening. (For a recipe, see page 102.) —B.K.

tate to the lively Ouzeri Bazayiazi. With tables spilling out into one of the market's breezy arcades, the place is filled with people engaged in spirited debates over their plates of fried red mullet and *garides saganaki*, a dish of shrimp sautéed with tomatoes, ouzo, and melted feta. I strike up a conversation with a patron, who tells me that the owner, Harilaos Moschou, was once a member of the Communist party and that his *ouzeri* has become a gathering place for like-minded intellectuals. I seek out Harilaos, a bearlike man holding court at a table by the door, and he proves to be a font of information about Thessaloniki. "I love the atmosphere of the market. It's like a souk, like something in Istanbul," he says, a little wistfully. "That's where my mother's family came from."

It's a familiar refrain in this city, where history has left in its wake a pervasive sense of loss and longing. The rich *meze* culture here is attributed, in part, to refugees from Turkey who began arriving in the 1920s after a harrowing exchange of populations. They brought with them a penchant for cumin and cinnamon and a number of distinctive *meze*-style dishes. Built in 1922 in the heart of the city's old Jewish quarter, Modiano Market is itself a monument to Thessaloniki's once thriving community of Sephardic Jews, nearly all of whom were transported to concentration camps during the German occupation in World War II.

The longer I stay in Thessaloniki, the more attuned I become to its rhythms. If it's breakfast time, you might go

THESSALONIKI'S LAVISHLY SPICED, ECLECTIC CUISINE REFLECTS ITS PROXIMITY TO TURKEY AND THE BALKANS

to Serraiakon, in Modiano, or to Athina, over on Vasilisis Olgas Street, for *bougatsa*, a flat, flaky pastry filled with feta or sweet custard—or buy one of the sesame-covered bread rings called *koulouria* from a vendor on any street corner. At lunchtime, people descend on Diagonios, a *psistaria* (grill house), for gyros, which in this city means a plate piled with crisp-around-the-edges pork garnished with onion. In the late afternoon, you could stop at Hatzis, a patisserie that's been making the syrup-soaked pastries called *siropiasta* since Thessaloniki was an Ottoman city—extravagant things like *revani*, a semolina cake drenched in syrup, and *kazan dipi*, a buffalo milk pudding torched like a *crème brûlée*. In the wee hours, you might find yourself under the fluorescent lights of Derlikatesen, alongside university students coming off a night in the bars and waiting hungrily for souvlaki, succulent chunks of grilled marinated pork wrapped in a pita along with thick-cut french fries and *tsatsiki* (yogurt and cucumber sauce) or yellow mustard. But the best insurance against a hangover, or so I'm told, can be had at Tsarouhas, a *patsatzithiko* (all-night tripe house) open since 1952, in the form of a bowl of the soothing, velvety tripe soup called *patsás*.

Then there's the weekend. This, I learned, is the time to

visit the fish taverns in the waterfront neighborhood of Kalamaria, on the southeastern edge of town. A local points me to Hamodrakas, the city's oldest, which is now in the hands of third-generation owner Panayiotis Gofas. On my visit, Gofas seems to be doing what he can to nudge customers in the direction of his own modern-Greek creations, but he still devotes much of his menu to standbys like the grilled octopus, which is sun-dried before cooking in order to concentrate its flavor. There's also cuttlefish served in a luscious red wine sauce and a number of dishes featuring the plump mussels for which Thessaloniki is justly famous: mussels fried and steamed, mussel pilaf, mussels *saganaki*.

One style of cooking I'm told I'll have a harder time tracking down is that of the city's Pontian Greeks, one of the groups that began streaming in from Turkey in the 1920s, in this case from the southern coast of the Black Sea. And so I'm thrilled to find Apo Dyo Horia, a little place not far from Modiano Market that serves this hearty food. "People still think of this as village cooking, not something to eat in a restaurant," says the owner, Anastasia Sidiropoulou. She shows me how to prepare her family's version of *tanomenon sorva*, a yogurt soup thick with nutty cracked wheat, and *varenika kimas*, ravioli-like circles of homemade pasta stuffed with minced pork and veal, served swimming in butter, and scattered with grated cheese and spicy *boukovo* (hot chile flakes).

As rich as Thessaloniki's offerings are to an outsider content to wander its streets, toward the end of my trip I find myself longing to have a home-cooked meal. So, I go back to Ouzeri Bazayiazi to talk to Harilaos Moschou, who seems to know everybody. In no time, he's arranged for me to meet his friend Aglaia Patronaki, who serves home-style dishes at her restaurant, Aglaia's Kitchen, near Modiano. She immediately invites me to dinner that night at the apartment of her daughter, Domna Karabetsou.

When I arrive, Aglaia, a woman in her fifties with tousled blonde hair, tells me that she's making rosemary chicken. Knowing that Aglaia's family has roots in Turkey, I ask which of the side dishes cooking on the stove might be considered *politiki kouzina*, or cooking in the style of Poli (the Greek name for Constantinople). "There's the pilaf," she offers. "If you see that on the table, you know the cooking is *politiki*."

"But you have to understand," her daughter Domna adds, "it's what you make, but also how you make it. With more spice, more flavor."

When it's time to eat, we head out to Domna's balcony, and it's not just the view of the city and the gulf fanning out below that tells me where I am. There's the brisk fragrance of rosemary, the sweetness of cinnamon, the sting of roasted peppers. The food is delicious and invigorating; we linger over our plates for hours as the last of the evening's light fades from the sky. I know I'm in Thessaloniki. —Beth Kracklauer

Rosemary chicken (see page 102 for a recipe) on the stove in Domna Karabetsou's kitchen in Thessaloniki.

Smoky, Hot

You might find peppers stuffed with cheese (pictured at right) in a taverna in Athens or in other parts of Greece, but this classic *meze* is associated above all with the region of Macedonia, in the north. Peppers—mild and hot, fresh and dried—are one of the agricultural glories of the region, and the queen of them all is the sweet, firm-fleshed, long red pepper grown around the town of Florina, in the mountains of Macedonia's far northwest. I ate these stuffed Florina peppers (for a recipe, see page 110) at Myrovolos Smyrni, an *ouzeri*, or ouzo bar, in business since the 1950s in the Macedonian city of Thessaloniki. The filling is a whipped feta dip called *htipiti*, which is spiked with hot chiles; some versions get a tangy boost from fresh lemon juice. It's a powerful combination of flavors, but then this is food designed as a match for anise-flavored ouzo or the equally potent spirit *tsipouro*. *Htipiti* is often served with pita for dipping, but in this case it's stuffed inside the split Florina peppers, which are broiled until they're black around the edges and the *htipiti* is golden and bubbly. The result—salty, sweet, smoky, hot, and luscious all at once—embodies the bold cuisine of the region better than any dish I know. —B.K.

A street in the center of Thessaloniki; facing page, a *meze* of peppers stuffed with spicy whipped feta (see page 110 for a recipe).



MAKING HORTOPITA

Aggeliki Bakali, a home cook in the central Greek village of Pertouli (pictured at right), makes this savory pie of greens, herbs, and feta from a family recipe. Feel free to replace her home-made phyllo with the store-bought variety (see page 116 for more info) and make the pie in a 9" x 13" rectangular baking dish. —Todd Coleman

- 4 cups bread flour**
- Kosher salt, to taste**
- 1 tsp. sugar**
- 1 cup plus 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup club soda**
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup vodka**
- 2 tbsp. white wine vinegar**
- 16 scallions, minced**
- 6 cloves garlic, minced**
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. Swiss chard, chopped**
- 1 cup each minced fresh dill, mint, and parsley**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 12 oz. feta, crumbled**

1 In a bowl, whisk together flour, $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, and sugar. Make a well in center; pour in 2 tbsp. oil, soda, vodka, and vinegar. Stir to make a dough. Knead dough on a floured surface until smooth. Divide into 6 balls. Cover dough balls with a damp tea towel; let rest 30 minutes. Start to roll out a dough ball using a thin rod or dowel.

2 Continue rolling dough, occasionally stretching it across the dowel, and turning it 90° after each roll, to create a 14" phyllo circle about $\frac{1}{16}$ " thick.

3 Grease a 12" cake pan with 2 tbsp. oil. Transfer phyllo circle to pan; let edges hang over; brush with 2 tbsp. oil. Roll second dough sheet to match first; lay it on top of first sheet. Brush with 2 tbsp. oil. (Alternatively, cut store-bought phyllo into two 11" x 15" sheets; layer them in a 9" x 13" baking dish, brushing each with oil.)

4 Heat $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil in a pot over medium-high heat. Add scallions and garlic; cook until soft, 3–4 minutes. Add chard and herbs; cook, stirring, until tender, 12–15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper; cool. Stir in feta. Spread a third of the greens in pan.

5 Heat oven to 400°. Roll out two more dough balls into 12" circles about $\frac{1}{16}$ " thick (or cut 4 store-bought phyllo sheets into 9" x 13" rectangles). Transfer to baking sheets; bake until golden, 4–6 minutes. Cool. Place 1 baked phyllo sheet (or 2 store-bought sheets) on top of greens; cover with half the remaining greens. Top with remaining sheet(s) and greens.

6 Roll 2 remaining balls into 12" circles about $\frac{1}{16}$ " thick (or cut 2 store-bought phyllo sheets into 9" x 13" rectangles). Cover greens with 1 phyllo sheet; brush with 2 tbsp. oil and score pie to vent. Top with remaining phyllo; fold phyllo hanging over edges onto top of pie; brush with 1 tbsp. oil. Bake 20 minutes. Reduce heat to 350°; bake until golden brown, 18–20 minutes. Let cool slightly.





Epirus

Simple dishes made with just a few ingredients characterize the cooking of this rugged, rural, and mountainous region in northwestern Greece. Fresh sheep's milk cheese and butter are cornerstones of Epirote cooking, as is corn, which was introduced from the New World in the 16th century and takes well to the region's comparatively cool, wet climate.



Maria Tsomokou (left) and Ioannis Basios enjoying a picnic lunch in the hills above Visani, a village in Epirus, in western Greece. The meal included fresh feta, wild greens pie, a plain omelette, sautéed pork seasoned with oregano, and chylopites (a pappardelle-like noodle) served with stewed hen.

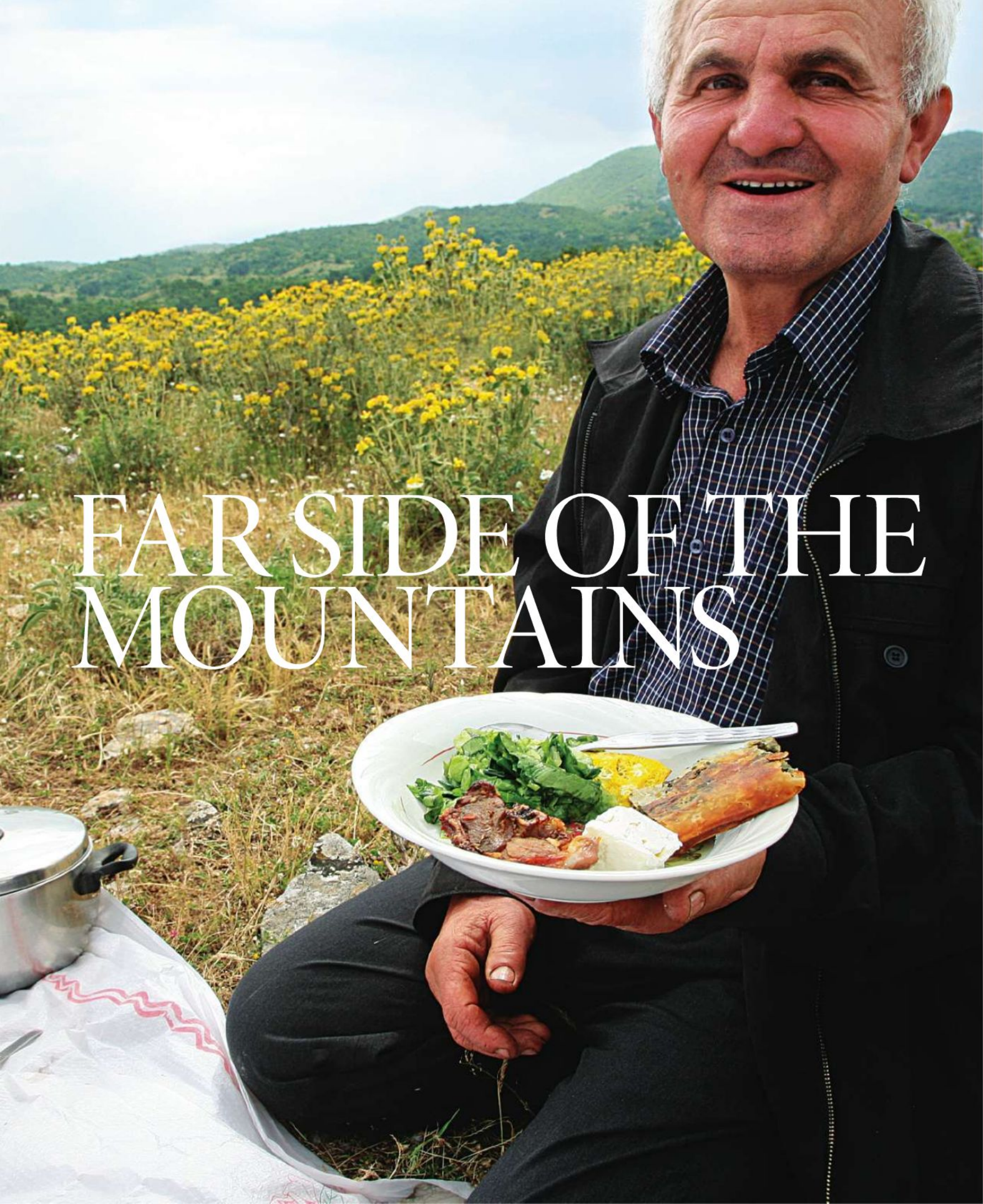
MARIA TSOMOKOU DIDN'T look pleased. "This isn't local food," she said, poking her fork at a smoked trout salad. We were seated at a restaurant in Ioannina, a city of 100,000 people that is the capital of Epirus, the mountainous region in western Greece. "It's got mayonnaise in it; no real local cook would use mayonnaise." She prodded at the salad again. "This should be light, fresh, dressed just with lemon juice and olive oil, and maybe, at most, a little oregano." To be honest, it tasted pretty good to me. In fact, I was impressed by all the dishes spread before us, a patchwork of local specialties and Greek taverna classics: frogs' legs in a marinara sauce, smoked eels, *skordalia* (a garlic-potato spread) served with roasted beets and slices of fire-grilled toast, and that smoked trout salad. There was a sparseness and immediacy about this cooking; it wasn't tricked up.

Then again, maybe it was the restaurant's stone floors and the damp, bone-chilling wind outside, for which the hearty food seemed tailor-made. The weather was a shock to me after flying in earlier that day from sweltering Athens, 270 miles to the southeast. The shimmering hot landscape of coastal southern Greece might as well have been another planet. "This is pretty typical weather for Epirus," Maria had told me when I arrived. She was 25, with long dark hair and striking eyes, and had grown up in Ioannina, the daughter of professors at the city's university, then left, then returned. Now she worked for a local winery and sometimes offered to show visitors around the region, which I'd heard a few people in Athens refer to as a mountain backwater. During World War II, I knew, Epirus had been a stronghold of the anti-Nazi resistance, and after the war, a redoubt for Communist fighters, many of whom fled north with their families across the border to Albania during the Greek civil war in the late 1940s. "It's hard for outsiders to understand this place sometimes," Maria said, "but this is where I belong."

After lunch, she gave me the grand tour. Ioannina, which sits astride a pretty, island-dotted lake, looked like a glorified alpine hamlet from the air. But on the ground it was a thriving city, offering little evidence of the poverty I'd heard afflicts the region, or of the financial crisis that was gripping Greece. This city was humming with life. The cramped, corridor-like streets teemed with people zipping in and out of shops: dress shops, shoe shops, toy shops, spanakopita shops, cafés, tavernas. The place seemed to move to its own peculiar, fast-forward pace, walled off from the rest of Greece by the curtain of snow-capped mountains that could be seen rising in the distance. Maria showed me the weedy ruins of the Ali Pasha Mosque, where the namesake Ottoman ruler based his court in the early 19th century. His famously brutal reign was part of a continuous Turkish presence in Epirus that lasted until the early 1900s.

The next day, Maria and I drove 40 minutes northwest



A photograph of an elderly man with white hair, smiling, sitting outdoors in a mountainous area. He is holding a white plate with food, including meat, cheese, and greens. The background features a field of yellow wildflowers and green hills under a cloudy sky. The text "FAR SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS" is overlaid in large white letters.

FAR SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS

of Ioannina to Zitsa, the village where the winery she worked for was located. The owner, Lesteres Glinavos, had invited us for lunch; before he became a winemaker, Maria told me, he was the mayor of Ioannina. As we drove, the city disappeared behind us, and soon we were in a picture-book landscape of villages perched preposterously on escarpments and mountainsides. Glinavos, a handsome man in his seventies, lived in a stone house on the winery's property; he and his Swedish-born wife, Anne Marie, welcomed us inside. I was glad for the shelter. A storm had kicked up, and from the house's windows I caught glimpses of lightning and wind-whipped rain.

Lunch came to the table, in its entirety, in a single giant roasting pan. In it was a whole roasted baby lamb, seasoned with nothing but salt and laid on top of crisp, golden potato wedges. This was meat in all its purity: robust, succulent, with brittle skin. I looked at Maria. This time her fork was poised respectfully over her plate. "This is Epirote food," she said after savoring a mouthful. The meal was startlingly elemental, beautiful. It was generous and unpretentious. It was just lunch, on a Wednesday, in Epirus during a thunderstorm.

THE NEXT DAY BROKE CHILLY and gray, again. Maria came by my hotel and told me she was taking me somewhere special. "My friend Jiannis Chaldoupis is fishing for us in the river near his house," she said. "He lives in a village not far from town." Jiannis, she explained, is of Gypsy descent and is a musician; he was going to bring the fish

THE LUNCH WAS BEAUTIFUL, STARTLINGLY ELEMENTAL. IT WAS GENEROUS AND UNPRETENTIOUS

he caught to the village's only taverna, where they'd cook it for us. "Then, if we're lucky, he'll play his clarinet."

We arrived in the village, called Parakalamos, in the late morning. Unlike the kind of picturesque, touristy villages that often feel abandoned and somehow soulless, this one was very much alive and real. The handful of stores lining the main street were busy with customers, and the single taverna was already packed with couples, families, groups of friends. The owners of the place, a mother and son, were doing all of the cooking and serving. I asked if I could go into the kitchen, and they eagerly beckoned me in; the woman was preparing a dish of wild greens—spring onions, fennel, a local kind of cress, nettles, mint. She minced them and sautéed them in an extravagant amount of olive oil until just wilted, then sprinkled on a little salt and placed them on a platter, which she topped with a couple of eggs fried in olive oil. I looked at the dish. I had to eat this *now*. I asked for a plate of it. They gave me one, along with a big thick slice of country-style white bread. I'm not a fast eater by

any stretch of the imagination, but I cleaned my plate in about 30 seconds. The gooey egg, the crispness of its edges, the bitter, green-earth taste of the limp greens: this was my dream food.

Then we sat down to the rest of lunch: roasted eggplants with fried potatoes; pasta tossed with a winey, slightly cured pork sausage; a Greek salad; Jiannis's river trout fried in olive oil with lemon. For dessert, there was goat's milk yogurt with mulberries and spring strawberries that had been poached in simple syrup and grappa-like *tsipouro*. What *is* this gorgeous food? I asked myself. How can sugar, fruit, liquor, and yogurt taste this good?

As we were emerging from our postprandial stupor, a few friends of Jiannis's showed up with musical instruments and, with no prompting, started playing; the sound quickly attracted a dozen or so people from outside, who strolled in and began to sing along. The song, I was told, was a melancholy one, about a woman who has died but is unable to release her soul to heaven. The music was frenetic, hypnotic. Once again I looked over at Maria. She was singing too. She looked at ease, happy, and gloriously in her element—less the urban intellectual than the glowing daughter or sister at a huge family reunion.

I SLEPT DEEPLY THAT NIGHT. IN THE morning, I awoke energized, hungry. I had one more day in Epirus. Maria said there was a family she wanted me to visit; sheepherders in a nearby town. When we got to their home, Zaharoula Basios, our host, a friendly woman with a big smile, had already finished most of the cooking. The weather was cool, but I decided to go out on a limb and ask if we could make a picnic of it. Zaharoula's husband, Ioannis, deemed it an excellent idea. I was given one of the pots to carry, and Maria found a blanket, which she used to pack up some plates and silverware. Then we left the house and marched single file up a hillside to a clearing surrounded by yellow wildflowers and wild oregano, which perfumed the air.

I helped Maria lay out our meal: a salad of blanched wild cress and baby lettuces; *pappardelle*-like egg noodles called *chylopites* that had been made by Zaharoula's son and were served with tender stewed hen; wild greens pie; and bone-in sliced pork shoulder pan-fried in olive oil and seasoned just so with salt and dried oregano. We ate it all with crusty bread and thick chunks of feta that the family had made a few days before.

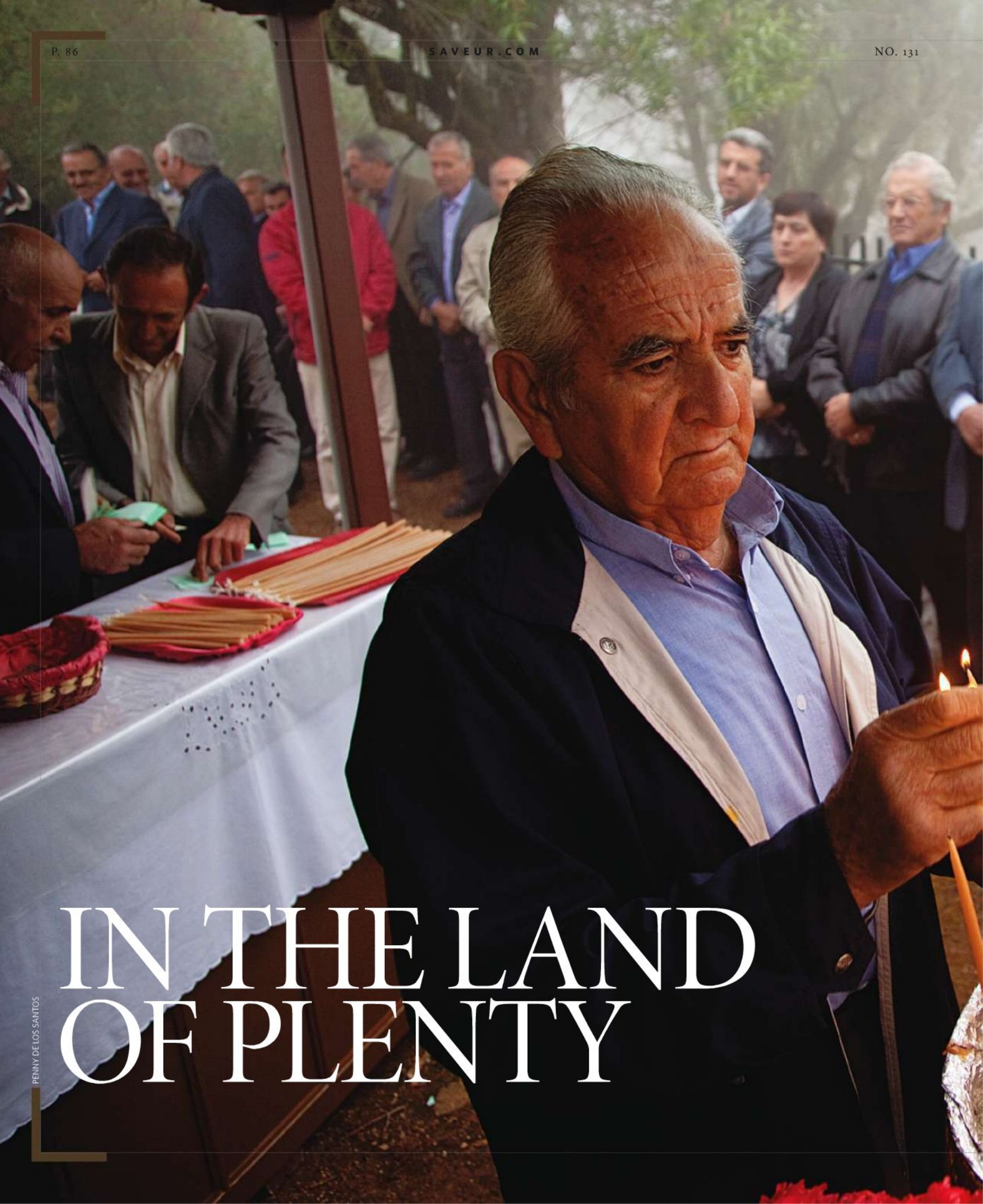
While we were eating, the stormy-looking clouds that had been hanging over us all day suddenly parted. In an instant, the pristine alpine landscape lit up. Remnants of clouds skittered by. The air warmed and freshened. It felt like a clearing in the center of the world. I realized that Maria had accomplished an elusive feat: I felt at that moment that I understood Epirus, its warm and open people, its singular landscape, its sense of itself as a land apart. —James Oseland

Pie in the Sky

Kalliopi Bitos pointed at a plate of her warm *alevropita*, the buttery, eggy cheese tart that is a beloved specialty in the mountain villages of Epirus, in northwestern Greece. (For a recipe, see page 106.) She motioned emphatically for me to dig in. The crunchy, burnished crust gave way to a popover-like center, punctuated with salty morsels of sheep's milk feta. I'd spent the morning hiking in the hills outside the village where Bitos runs her small taverna, and her *alevropita* might as well have been sent down by the gods from Mount Olympus—nourishing, elemental, and satisfying to the soul. Bitos, a small but imposing figure in her seventies, has been serving her pies to hungry hikers since the 1970s. I decided I had to have the recipe. It took some pleading, but eventually Bitos flashed a quick smile and invited me into her kitchen. In a dented tin pot, she whisked bright green olive oil with an egg, baking powder, salt, and a dash of *tsipouro*, a grappa-like liquor. She stirred in water and flour, then some crumbled feta. She poured the batter into a greased baking pan, added some more feta and a few dabs of butter, topped it all with a dusting of paprika, and slid it into the oven. Half an hour later, the *alevropita* was dappled with brown spots and sizzling pools of foamy butter. No sooner was the pie out of the oven than Bitos was jabbing her finger at it again, urging me to sit down and eat. —Indrani Sen



Alevropita, an Epirote feta tart (see page 106 for a recipe).



IN THE LAND OF PLENTY

PENNY DE LOS SANTOS





The Peloponnese

This 8,320-square-mile peninsula has a richly variegated landscape: a mountainous interior, broad valleys, a coastal plain, and 856 miles of coastline. That landscape supports an exceptional agricultural diversity. The plain teems with artichokes and eggplants; agiorgitiko grapes thrive in the northeast's Nemea Valley; and the mountains are abundant with olives, including kalamatas, which are named after the southwestern port city. The Peloponnese is known, too, for its unique animal products, including barrel-aged feta and olive oil-cured pork, which comes from the Mani, the peninsula's remote middle spur.



FACING PAGE: PENNY DE LOS SANTOS; MAP: THEM FACTORY

ON AN UNUSUALLY MISTY spring morning along Greece's southeastern Peloponnesian coast, everyone in Poulithra and Amygdalia had come to a small church on the winding road that connects the two towns. They were celebrating a name day, honoring those members of the community who are named after a particular saint, or in this case two, Saints Constantine and Helen. I had been in the area for less than a week, and already I knew half the congregants: the shepherds who milk their goats twice a day to make a brined and barrel-aged cheese called *touloumotyri*; the shepherds' brother, who is Poulithra's town baker; three local beekeepers, including an uncle of my friend and traveling companion, Maria Xerakia; and many others in Maria's extended family and their neighbors.

The church couldn't hold everyone, and the crowd spilled into the yard, from which the priest's intonations could be heard. The older men solemnly crossed themselves as the liturgy was read. A small white goat—the church raffle prize—stood tied to a tree and bleated. People lit beeswax candles for the saints, and when the service was over, we gathered around tables piled high with *artos*, a bread of celebration and offering that the baker, Dimitris Konstantas, had dusted with confectioners' sugar and flavored with a fruity spice called *mahlepi*, made from the pits of tart Saint Lucie cherries. As we greeted one another with good wishes, we filled up on slice after slice of *artos*. It was substantial, and it was sweet.

I had come to Poulithra and Amygdalia with Maria—a 22-year-old writer who lives in New York City but spends part of the year here, in her parents' birthplace—to sample home cooking in Greece's most fertile region, the Peloponnese: the hand-shaped peninsula that hangs off the mainland's bottom left corner. Here, lemons, oranges, artichokes, wine grapes, wheat, and other crops grow in profusion. It's an abundance that once supported the Mycenaean cities of Homeric legend and, later, classical Sparta (the modern city is located in Laconia, the peninsula's southeastern prefecture). The members of Maria's extended family take advantage of all of it, raising or foraging the ingredients for nearly all the foods they eat, from olive bread, made with meaty kalamata olives, freshly dug sweet onions, and hand-stretched phyllo dough, to stews of greens and fresh fava beans.

It was Diamando Xerakia, Maria's energetic 62-year-old aunt, who gave me my first taste of home cooking here. I was introduced to her just after I got to the town—an assemblage of red-tile roofs and coffee shops where old men rest in the shade along narrow lanes bordered by citrus trees—and I witnessed this powerhouse cook at work in the basement kitchen of her home. She was bak-

ing bread when I arrived; she made three different kinds: *karveli*, a sourdough loaf flavored with anise; *tyganopsomo*, disks of dough fried to a golden brown; and an addictive flat bread called *ladopropira*, which is punched down onto a sesame-sprinkled cookie sheet, then doused with olive oil and baked to the semihard consistency of a soft pretzel. After she finished with the bread, she filled the hollowed-out shells of fried eggplants with a rich lamb-and-veal mixture flavored with onion and cloves, covered them with a thick béchamel sauce, and baked them to create a dish called *papoutsakia*, or "little shoes." And she hand-pressed nuggets of pasta dough into curved shapes called *gogyzes*, which she boiled and tossed with grated *touloumotyri* and sizzling goats' butter. Commenting that the stuffed eggplants, the bread, and the creamy pasta would make me fat but that greens would keep me thin, she served the former foods with an enormous mound of tender greens called *vlita*. While many greens are foraged wild in early spring in the pastures near Amygdalia and shade-dried to be eaten throughout the year, *vlita* are cultivated in yards and boiled fresh; Diamando's had an almost wheatlike flavor.

POULITHRA AND AMYGDALIA are, in essence, one town. Historically, the people of this sleepy section of the Peloponnese's Arcadian prefecture would spend half the year in the waterfront town of Poulithra and then, as winter snows lapsed into mild mountain summers, move eight miles up-country to Amygdalia to escape the coastal heat. In both places, they lived off nature's plenty: the coast offered citrus, seafood, and a host of crops like the tender, small *tsakoniki* eggplants native to the area, while the mountains yielded meat and dairy from herds of goats and sheep, plus figs, wild greens, honey, walnuts, and the almonds after which Amygdalia is named. Today, with money to be made catering to summer vacationers from Athens, most locals live year-round in Poulithra. But their mountain properties are far from abandoned. The houses are maintained, and family members visit the up-county village often to gather culinary riches from its yards and pastures. "If you're from Poulithra," Maria had told me before my trip, "you're from Amygdalia. It's the same place."

She'd told me as well that meals here—particularly the huge midday repast, typically followed by an afternoon snooze—tend to be big gatherings, shared by children and parents and grandparents, relations from far and near, and neighbors and friends who happen by. Almost always, the extended family contributes to the table, bringing foods they've prepared at home. The name day lunch Maria and I attended was no exception. Scores of friends and family came together beneath a carob tree outside the home of her uncle, Christos Moriatis, the beekeeper, whose 14-year-old son is named Konstantinos, after the saint. Christos's wife, Maria, shared hostessing duties with Diamando, who prepared a dish of pork, which is popular

The author's friend Maria Xerakia, facing page, center, sharing dishes including roasted vegetables (see page 106 for a recipe) and eggplant casserole; previous pages: a name day service.



Wild and Sweet

With its diversity of wild plants, Greece has always been well suited to the making of honey. The Minoan word for it, *meli*, appears on stone tablets carved some 3,500 years ago. During the height of ancient Greek civilization, honey was considered a food of the gods, and in the fourth century B.C., Hippocrates himself endorsed it for its healing properties. Today, Greece produces 12,000 tons of honey each year. It is used in desserts like baklava as well as in dishes like the stew of chicken and tomato called *kotopoulo kapama* and in marinades for meat. Honey is always on the table when I visit my family in Greece. We get ours from my uncle Christos Moriatis, a third-generation beekeeper, who transports his 200 bee boxes between mountain villages, seeking specific blooms and saps. In March, it's spring heather, which yields a slightly bitter honey. From April through May, his bees make sharp-tasting honey from white arbutus flowers and a sweet honey from kermes oak. But my favorite, which I drizzle onto Greek yogurt, is the floral honey made from wild thyme. The herb's short flowering season and its tiny blooms mean the bees have to labor for small yields. But because this honey is so aromatic ("If you enter my workshop while I'm making it, you might pass out," my uncle says), it is the most prized of all. —*Maria Xerakia*



NEARLY ALL THE INGREDIENTS AT THE LUNCH HAD BEEN SOURCED NEARBY BY FAMILY MEMBERS

in the region, stewed in a creamy, tangy lemon-and-egg sauce with young celery that Diamando had grown alongside the wild greens in her backyard. Nearly all of the ingredients in the dishes at the lunch, in fact, had been sourced nearby by family members. The tender goat meat that our hostess Maria stewed in a delicious allspice-flavored tomato sauce came from a kid raised by Diamando's husband, Theodoros. Christos's mother had foraged the mild-tasting hyacinth bulbs that were poached in a peppery olive oil, which in turn had been made from the fruit of a tree growing in Maria's yard. All the spring produce in the rich eggplant casserole, cooked with plenty of onions, tomatoes, and feta; the mixed roasted vegetables; and the salad strewn with rusks had been grown in the Moriatises' garden. Even the light-bodied retsina served with lunch had been made by someone at the table: Diamando's son Takis, who used resin from local pine trees to impart the wine's namesake flavor. What's more, I realized, it was only May. As the weather got warmer, even more of the fruits and vegetables Maria cooked with would come from the garden.

Diamando's other two sons, Christos and Georgios,

joined us to eat; friends wandered over for coffee. We polished off our meal with spoon sweets made from wild pears and green walnuts foraged from the mountains. There was a moist walnut cake, made from nuts Christos's mother had collected from her own trees. Finally, there were *diples*. The sweet, ouzo-spiked fritters, a requisite holiday dessert, are bigger and bolder in the Peloponnese than in most other parts of Greece. Maria had shown me how she expertly shapes the fritters, folding them with the tines of a granny fork into wide, wallet-shaped forms. After frying, the fritters are soaked in syrup. In Christos's house, that syrup was made with his own honey, produced by bees he raises in the yard and carts to locations throughout the nearby mountains so they can feed on seasonal plants and trees. On this day we tasted his very best blend, a heady mix of fir and thyme honeys that gave notes of vanilla and caramel. It was the flavor of celebration and plenitude. —*Betsy Andrews*

Diamando Xerakia making moussaka, a rich dish of meat sauce and eggplant. Facing page, Xerakia's *papoutsakia*, a stuffed eggplant dish baked with béchamel (see page 104 for a recipe).



SMALL WONDERS

I must have been 18 when, on a trip to the northern city of Thessaloniki, I first tasted the dish that is now my favorite *meze*, or small plate: plump, batter-fried mussels with a crunchy exterior and a soft, juicy core, pierced with toothpicks and arranged around a dollop of thick garlic sauce. The dish was a local specialty, and each mollusk was complex and powerful: a little meal unto itself. Years later, when I started entertaining at home, this was the *meze* that my friends hankered for, the one that always got finished first.

Mezedes, as the dishes are collectively known (there are variations on the word throughout the Mediterranean), are essential to the Greek way of eating. Served as snacks or appetizers in homes and tavernas, they make a convivial beginning to a meal. They're also designed to accompany drinks, as it's frowned upon here to bend an elbow on an empty stomach. (As long as you're eating, it's safe to order another round.)

Greeks have been eating this way since ancient times; the third-century author Athenaeus, for instance, writes of meals that centered on "a large tray on which are five small plates." But tavernas that feature extensive and elaborate *meze* spreads are a relatively new phenomenon; these places were likely inspired by the popularity of traditional coffee bars in cities like Thessaloniki and Volos in northern Greece and by

the legendary ouzo bars of Lesbos (ouzo being Greece's aniseed-flavored liquor), where cooks prepare impressive spreads with local vegetables and with the day's catch. Traditionally, such places would also serve one-pot meals of stewed beans, greens, and meats, since there is no difference between a *meze* and a main course other than the size of the plate. "Only soup can't be made into *meze*," my grandmother used to say.

Mezedes can range from humble to fancy. The simplest—oil-cured olives, feta sprinkled with oregano, pickled peppers—are known as *pikilia*, which means "assortment," and they usually arrive free of charge with any order of spirits, wine, or beer. Some *mezedes* are regional (like the mussels from Thessaloniki), while others are seasonal (like the fava beans and chickpeas you'll see diners shelling at their tables in spring). Then there are the classics you'll find always and everywhere: grilled octopus; garlicky dips served with bread; the rice-and-herb-filled grape leaves called *dolmades*; cheese-and-tomato-laden baked dishes called *saganaki*; and the ubiquitous tiny meatballs known as *keftedes*. By convention, one starts with the cold vegetables, spreads, and pickles, continues on to cold seafood, and finishes with the fried and warm foods. Whoever has "the quickest fork," as the saying goes, succeeds in tasting them all. —Aglia Kremezi



Mezedes at A&B Makrinita, a taverna in Makrinita, Greece; clockwise from center: sausage, peppers, and tomato; zucchini saganaki; stuffed peppers; pickled fiddlehead ferns; pickled pistachio sprouts; eggplant saganaki; and fresh goat cheese.



AT THE WATER'S EDGE

The Cyclades

This archipelago extends from just off the southeastern coast of the mainland, near Athens, nearly to the Sea of Crete. Stark, sun-bleached, and scoured by ocean winds, the islands are mostly arid, with small tracts of arable land that yield tomatoes, pulses, and grapes. One of the islands, Santorini, is home to celebrated wines. But the Cyclades' greatest bounty comes from the sea: fresh and cured fish play a central role in the regional cuisine.



Facing page: sea bass wrapped in fig leaves and grilled over hardwood coals (see page 104 for a recipe).

BRING FISH!" THAT WAS THE entirety of the text message I got from Aglaia Kremezi on the morning I was to visit her at her home on Kea, the northwesternmost island in Greece's Cyclades archipelago. At 8:00 A.M., I walked down to the waterfront in Korissia, Kea's port, and picked up a few sea bass at a fishmonger's shop facing the docks, where fishing boats were tying up to sell their morning catch. I paid for the sea bass and approached a sturdy wooden boat named *Marigo*; spilling out from wooden crates on the deck were dozens of glistening sea bream, along with the odd scorpion fish, barracuda, small tuna, and red mullet. I bought four sea bream that were still stiff with rigor mortis, a sign that they'd been pulled from the water just hours before.

If there's a paradise on earth for a seafood lover like me, it is Kea—more specifically, the outdoor kitchen where Aglaia, a journalist and cookbook author, runs a cooking school with her husband, Costas Moraitis. The week I spent there, learning the Greek way with fish, was like a waking dream. Every sun-drenched day began with a trip to the docks and from there flowed seamlessly from cooking to eating to cooking and back again. Always, we cooked with the freshest imaginable fish, often with little more than hot coals or a soup pot and some fresh garden vegetables or wild herbs.

On that first day, we grilled the sea bass and sea bream over hardwood coals in a brick grill built into a wall bordering the yard. After starting the fire, Costas snipped a few fig leaves the size of a catcher's mitt from a tree on the property and wrapped them around the bass. Not long after being laid over the coals, the leaves began to sizzle and sear, exuding a sweet, faintly caramelized aroma; soon the charred leaves had melded to the crisping skin. The dish, Costas told

me, is a direct link to the ancient Greeks, who wrapped the belly of tuna in fig leaves and buried it with hot embers. We transferred the fish onto platters and Aglaia anointed them with *ladolemono*, a simple sauce of olive oil and lemon juice. We'd done next to nothing to this fish except apply fire, and it was one of the finest meals I could remember, taken in the shade of the house's terrace in the early afternoon. The bass's flesh was incomparably moist, protected and subtly sweetened by its fig leaf wrapping; I ate hungrily, dragging forkfuls through puddles of the sauce.

The next day at the docks we bought two 18-inch *drakena*, a firm-fleshed species I recognized as weever fish, as well as one fierce-looking moray eel. "Today, we'll make kakavia," Aglaia said; this classic Aegean fish stew, I'd heard,

THE BASS'S FLESH WAS INCOMPARABLY MOIST, PROTECTED AND SUBTLY SWEETENED BY ITS FIG LEAF WRAPPING

may be a forerunner of French bouillabaisse. Back in her kitchen, Aglaia fileted the weever fish and tossed its head and bones into a pot along with the eel, some white wine, oregano, fennel, and chopped onion. She let it all boil for an hour or so, until the gelatin in the eel flesh and fish bones had thickened and enriched the broth. Then she strained the liquid and added garlic, potatoes, carrots, zucchini, and the filets. "My mom used to mash the vegetables together to make it thicker," she said as she ladled the chunky soup into bowls, "but we just eat it like this." Once again, doing less







Costas Moraitis heats a *gastro*, a rustic oven, in his front yard on the island of Kea.

to the food seemed to result in something greater.

The preparation of the grilled octopus we had for lunch a few days later was only slightly more complicated. The first step in the process had been done for us: the fisherman who'd sold us the octopus had already pounded the two-foot-long creature repeatedly against the dock to break down the proteins in its flesh. To finish the tenderizing process, Aglaia simmered the octopus in her kitchen. Then she marinated the tentacles in that holy trinity of Greek flavorings—olive oil, oregano, and lemon juice—for two days to let them become supple and flavorful. Finally, we grilled them quickly in the hearth over hardwood coals and rosemary branches and ate them with griddled pita topped with tomato sauce and feta, and grilled, rosemary-stuffed leg of lamb.

Over the course of a few days, my world seemed to shrink to the confines of Aglaia and Costas's yard. It was where we cooked (once, using a rustic coal-heated oven called a *gastro*), where we ate, where we picked the fresh herbs, dug the carrots, and cut the artichokes to accompany our meals. On one of the few occasions when we made an excursion to find an ingredient other than fish, Costas and I hiked down an old stone path to the remains of the ancient city of Karthaia, where we foraged for the wild capers that grow on bushes in the shadow of a ruined temple of Apollo, built in 530 B.C. On our way there, Costas pointed out a *kathikia*, a type of low-slung stone dwelling that many believe dates back to

SHE MARINATED THE OCTOPUS IN THE HOLY TRINITY OF GREEK FLAVORINGS—OLIVE OIL, OREGANO, AND LEMON JUICE

antiquity; it had an outdoor hearth that reminded me of the one we'd been using to cook our own meals.

When we got back to the house, Aglaia soaked the capers in a jar of brine to mellow their bitter edge and then started to butterfly the fresh sardines we'd bought that morning. "Use a dull knife so you don't pierce the back of the fish," she said before gently rinsing the fish with vinegar and laying them in a bath of olive oil, garlic, lemon juice, and parsley for a simple *meze*. "Poor man's food," she said as we sat down to eat.

On my last night, I decided to venture out to a nearby taverna for dinner. After I sat down, the owner appeared at my table and invited me back into the kitchen. There, nestled into crushed ice in stainless-steel sinks, were four kinds of fish. "Which would you like?" he asked. I wasn't receiving special treatment; Aglaia had told me it was common for guests to be allowed to pick their own fish. I pointed to two gleaming, six-inch-long red mullets. "Ah, barbounia," the owner said. "Grilled or fried?" I ordered them grilled and went back to my table to sip on a Mythos beer and gaze out at the marina, where the anchored boats of Kea's fishermen rocked silently in the waves. —Hunter Lewis



Essential Herb

Go for a hike in the countryside in many parts of Greece, and you'll smell it: fragrant wild oregano, its flowering shrubs growing in valleys and on hillsides. *Rigani*, as it is called in Greek, is arguably the most important herb in the country's cooking, providing a signature flavor for countless dishes. Almost always used in its dried form, it is crumbled over foods as a finishing touch or added to both fresh and cooked preparations to lend savory depth. *Origanum vulgare hirtum*, the subspecies that's native to Greece and Turkey, is the one most prized by Greek cooks because of its high concentration of aromatic compounds, which make the herb extraordinarily spicy and pungent. I've seen cooks use it to season every kind of dish, from hearty, feta-studded salads to vegetable stews. They sprinkle oregano over grilled fish and egg dishes, and they blend it with oil and lemon juice to make marinades for meat, especially for souvlaki. The herb's palate-awakening bite seasons all sorts of *meze*, including *keftedes* (meatballs) and shrimp *saganaki* baked with tomatoes and feta, and it's even brewed into tea. (See page 119 for a source.) —H.L.

THE GUIDE

Greece

Dinner for two with drinks and tip:

Inexpensive Under \$20 **Moderate** \$20–\$80 **Expensive** Over \$80

Athens and the nearby port city of Piraeus are the air and ferry hubs, respectively, for travel to outlying Greek regions and the country's islands. For more information on traveling in Greece, contact the Greek National Tourism Office: www.greektourism.com. Virtuoso, an online travel service, offers custom itineraries; visit www.saveur.com/virtuoso.

ATHENS

FILEMA 16 Romvis, Kentro (30/210/325-0222). **Moderate.** This taverna in the center of Athens is known for its *keftedes* (meatballs), lamb and beef kebabs, and pork chops, as well as the traditional *laika* and *rebetiko* music played here on Saturday nights throughout the winter.

GEFSEIS ME ONOMASIA PROELEFTIS 317 Kifissias Avenue, Kifissia (30/210/800-1402). **Expensive.** Chef Nena Ismirnoglou carefully sources produce, cheeses, and meats from small producers all over Greece. Her fresh-tasting creations include grilled calamari served with a purée of smoked eggplant and a lime sauce, and an arugula salad with strawberries, mint, pistachios, and cured ham from Karpenisi, in central Greece.

THE GLORIOUS GREEK KITCHEN (30/210/689-8877; www.diane.kochilas.com). Cookbook author Diane Kochilas offers Greek cooking classes and food-focused walking tours in Athens as well as cooking programs at her home on the island of Ikaria.

HOLIDAY INN ATHENS-ATTICA Attica Avenue, between exits 17 and 18 (30/210/668-9000; www.hiathens.com). Rates: \$153 double. This modern business hotel is a convenient and comfortable option near the

airport for travelers making short stopovers in the capital.

HOTEL SOFTEL ATHENS AIRPORT 19019 Spata (30/210/354-4000; www.sofitel.com). Rates: \$190–\$360 double. Offering 345 airy rooms, two locally acclaimed restaurants, and a spa, this luxury airport hotel is



A meal of river trout fried in olive oil, roasted eggplant with fried potatoes, and other dishes at Gormos, a taverna in the village of Parakalamos, in Epirus.

situated only 20 minutes by car from downtown.

I NAXOS 1 Plateia Christokopidou, Psyrri (30/210/321-8222). **Inexpensive.** This family-run restaurant in the Psyrri district is known for its friendly atmosphere and specialties from the island of Naxos—seafood both grilled and fried and dishes like mussels in tomato sauce.

IOANNIS 28-34 Athanasiou Diakou

Street (inside the Royal Olympic Hotel; 30/210/928-8400). **Expensive.** Kostas Tsigas, who served as the executive chef for the kitchens feeding the athletes at the 2004 Summer Olympics, whips up delicious Mediterranean fare at this rooftop restaurant with striking views of the nearby ruins of the Temple of Zeus.

VAROULKO, DELIGEORGI 80 Piraeus Street, Keramikou (30/210/522-8400). **Expensive.** Michelin-starred chef Lefteris Lazarou is famed for his creative seafood dishes. Try the octopus simmered in sweet Greek red wine,

or the monkfish liver topped with soy sauce, honey, and balsamic vinegar.

CRETE

ALEXANDER Paralia, Tobrouk, Iraklion (30/281/038-0165). **Inexpensive.** This *psarotaverna* (fish tavern) on Tobrouk beach, east of Iraklion, is one of the best places in town to try seafood. Go for the sea urchin roe, as well as the *kakavia*, a traditional seafood soup.

ENAGRON Axos Mylopotamou (30/283/406-1611; www.enagron.gr). Rates: \$83–\$128 double. This guesthouse on Mount Psiloritis is surrounded by miles of natural beauty. The hotel offers apartments with verandas facing the mountains, as well as cooking and cheese-making classes.

GALAXY HOTEL 75 Dimokratias Avenue, Iraklion (30/281/023-8812; www.economouhotels.com). Rates: \$149–\$255 double. Recently renovated, this sleek hotel in Iraklion, Crete's capital city, has been owned by the Economou family for 32 years. Vetri, its restaurant, serves new takes on Cretan specialties like sautéed grouper with fava beans, eggplant salad, and tomato marmalade; and lamb with artichokes in a creamy lemon sauce.

IORDANIS 24 Apokronou, Chania (30/282/108-8855; www.iordanis.gr). **Inexpensive.** Located in a popular harbor town, this bakery is known throughout the island for its one and only offering: the sweet custard-filled phyllo pie called *bougatsa*.

MILIA MOUNTAIN RETREAT 73012 Vlatos, Kissamos, Chania (30/282/104-6774; www.milia.gr). Rates: \$80–\$103 double. This restored medieval settlement in the western highlands is the closest travelers can get to experiencing traditional Cretan life. Rustic guesthouses, built from the foundations of old village homes, reflect the area's architectural heritage. The owners offer Cretan cooking classes.

TAVERNA MARAZAKIS SKALANI Iraklion (30/281/073-1435). **Inexpensive.** At this ideal pit stop on the road between Iraklion, Crete's capital, and the Minoan ruins at Knossos, the chef offers superb renditions of beloved Cretan dishes like *boubouristi* (rosemary-scented snails) and *kouneli stifado* (rabbit stew).

EPHROS

EPHROS PALACE 7km Nat. Road, Ioannina (30/265/109-3555; www.ephros.com)

.epiruspalace.gr). Rates: \$119–\$144 double. This luxurious hotel offers 200 well-appointed rooms and is situated a short drive from the city's downtown.

ES AEI 50 Koundouriotou Street, Ioannina (30/265/103-4571). Moderate. This creative eatery has more than 60 *mezedes* on the menu, including *keftedes* and savory pies made from local ingredients.

GLINAVOS WINERY Monastery, 45500 Zitsa (30/265/802-2212). In the grape-growing region of Zitsa, this winery offers tours and tastings of its delicious wines, made from local varietals that include *debina* and *beraki*.

GORMOS Parakalamos, Ioannina (30/265/303-1256). Inexpensive. This taverna serves *mayirefta* (comfort food) during the day and grilled food at night; specialties include *koftos* (chicken cooked with cracked wheat) and *alevropita* (a buttery feta tart).

PITA TIS KIKITSAS Kentrikou Platia, Monodendri (30/265/307-1340; www.visitzagori.com). Moderate. Monodendri, a village in the Zagori region of Epirus, is famous for its *alevropita*, which this restaurant has been making for more than 50 years.

STOA LOULI 78 Anexartias Street, Ioannina (30/265/107-1322). Inexpensive. Originally built in 1875 as an inn, this restaurant serves outstanding Epirote specialties. Try the *melitzanes rola*, rolled-up eggplant stuffed with cheese and bacon, and the *gemista kremydia*, onions stuffed with cheese and mint.

KEA

ARISTOS Vourkari, Kea (30/228/802-1171). Moderate. This taverna with tables spilling out onto the marina in the town of Vourkari specializes in fresh fish, including fried or grilled red mullet, lobster and spaghetti, and a salad made with rusks and local cheese.

KEA ARTISANAL Kea, Cyclades (30/228/802-1917; www.keartisanal.com). Food writer Aglaia Kremezi welcomes students into her home on Kea for weeklong cooking classes with local home cooks that include tours of the island's markets and cultural sites.

PORTO KEA SUITES Korissia 84002, Kea (30/228/802-2870; www.portokea-suites.com). Rates: \$126–\$187 double. These 35 comfortable suites overlooking the port in Korissia, Kea's largest town, are near some of the island's best tavernas and beaches.



Clockwise from top left: custard pie at Filema, in Athens; a server at Aristotelous, in Thessaloniki; mussels in tomato sauce at I Naxos, in Athens; a server with a selection of mezedes at Myrovolos Smyrni, in Thessaloniki.

ROLANDO'S OUZERI Ioulis, Hora, Kea (30/228/802-2224). Inexpensive. Fried whitebait is the house specialty at this tiny taverna on the central square in Ioulis, a picturesque mountain village on the island of Kea.

THE PELOPONNESE

COSTA NAVARINO Navarino Dunes, Costa Navarino, 24001 Messinia (30/272/309-6000; www.costa

navarino.com). Rates: \$395–\$630 double. This new luxury resort is set amid olive and citrus groves along the Bay of Navarino. The chefs at its several restaurants work with locally sourced ingredients, and a culinary institute is in the works.

DIETHNES 105 Paleologou, Sparta (30/273/102-8636). Moderate. For close to half a century, people have eaten *loukaniko* (pork sausage flavored with orange and leek) and other traditional dishes in the pleasant, shaded garden of this restaurant in the center of Sparta.



O ZAVALIS Main beach road, Poulithra (30/275/705-1341). Inexpensive. This excellent family-owned waterfront taverna in the coastal village of Poulithra offers fresh seafood, *mezedes*, and many traditional Peloponnese dishes.

TO PETRINO Off the main square, Peleta (30/275/703-1025). Inexpensive. This casual restaurant in the southeastern village of Peleta is

renowned for its lamb roasted in an outdoor oven, available on weekends and holidays in the summer only.

THESSALONIKI

ELECTRA PALACE 9 Aristotelous Square (30/231/029-4000; www.electrahotels.gr). Rates: \$230–\$315 double. This hotel in the heart of the city center has 130 rooms and a rooftop restaurant with a spectacular view of the Thermaic Gulf and Mount Olympus.

HAMODRAKAS 13 M. Gagili Street, Paralia Aretsou, Kalamaria (30/231/044-7943; www.hamodrakas.gr). Moderate. This 84-year-old *psarotaverna* (fish tavern) sits on the water in the Kalamaria district. Along with third-generation owner Panayiotis Gofas's modern-Greek creations, its menu of traditional offerings includes fried mussels and cuttlefish in red wine sauce.

MYROVOLOS SMYRNI 32 Ermou-Komnion, Modiano Market (30/231/027-4170). Inexpensive. Serving classic *mezedes* like *mydia saganaki* (mussels in an ouzo, tomato, and feta sauce) and sweet Florina peppers stuffed with *htipiti* (spicy whipped feta) since the 1950s, this beloved *ouzeri* in the historic Modiano Market provides an excellent introduction to Thessaloniki and its food.

OUZERI ARISTOTELOUS 8 Aristotelous Street (30/231/023-0762). Inexpensive. Tucked away behind a portico in Thessaloniki's central Aristotelous Square, this intimate *ouzeri* is known for its exceptional *mezedes*, including cheese-stuffed cuttlefish, fried smelts, and grilled eggplant.

TERKENLIS 30 Tsimiski (30/231/027-1148; www.terkenlis.gr). Moderate. This pastry shop makes some of the city's best *tsoureki*, a brioche-like Easter bread. The bakery features half a dozen versions, including lemon, orange, chestnut, and chocolate.

MAIN COURSES

ARNI ME DENDROLIVANO

(Roasted Lamb with Rosemary)

SERVES 6-8

Author Aglaia Kremezi's technique of roasting lamb over a bed of rosemary sprigs lends this Greek classic (pictured below) a smoky, herbal flavor.

- 1 4-5-lb. semi-boneless leg of lamb, preferably New Zealand
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 8 cloves garlic
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp. Aleppo pepper (see page 119)
- 15 sprigs fresh rosemary

1 Put lamb in a roasting pan and make 3 incisions in lamb, spaced about 3" apart, down to the bone. Season lamb generously with salt; set aside. Put garlic in the bowl of a food processor and process until minced. Add oil, lemon juice, mustard, and Aleppo pepper and purée. Rub mixture all over lamb and let marinate for 1 hour at room temperature or overnight in the refrigerator.

2 Build a medium-hot fire on one side of a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to medium-high heat. (Alternatively, heat oven to 500°.) Tuck rosemary underneath lamb. Put roasting pan on grill so that it cooks over indirect heat (or into oven, reducing heat to 350° after 20 minutes) and cook, lid down, turning once and basting occasionally with the juices in the pan, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the meat reads 135° (for medium), about 1 hour. Transfer lamb to a cutting board and let cool for 20 minutes. Carve lamb and serve.

HORTA ME AVGA TIGANITA

(Wild Greens with Fried Eggs)

SERVES 6

This dish from Epirus (pictured on page 104) marries the silky richness of an egg with the pleasing, mild bitterness of wild greens.

- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups extra-virgin olive oil
- 10 scallions, minced
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. mixed greens, such as nettles, lamb's-quarter, spinach, Swiss chard, and arugula, washed and minced
- 1 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 cup chopped fresh mint leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fennel fronds
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 6 eggs

1 Heat $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil in a 5-qt. pot over medium-high heat. Add scallions and



Clockwise from top left: eggplant and parsley dip; meatballs in tomato sauce; roasted lamb with rosemary; stuffed grape leaves.

cook for 4 minutes. Add greens, parsley, mint, fennel, garlic, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water; season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring, until greens are tender, 18-20 minutes. Remove from heat.

2 Heat $\frac{3}{4}$ cup oil in an 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Working in two batches, crack eggs into skillet; cook, constantly spooning oil over yolks, until yolks are just set, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer eggs to a plate. Divide greens between

plates and top each with a fried egg.

KAKAVIA

(Fish and Vegetable Soup)

SERVES 4-6

Kea-based author Aglaia Kremezi adds eel to her fish soup, which lends body and flavor to the broth (pictured on page 104).

- 7 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 sprigs flat-leaf parsley
- 2 sprigs fresh oregano
- 2 dried bay leaves
- 1 onion, halved
- $\frac{1}{2}$ bulb fennel, plus 3 fronds



- 2 medium zucchini, cut into 2" pieces
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

1 Heat 5 tbsp. oil in a 5-qt. pot over high heat. Add the parsley, oregano, bay leaves, onions, and fennel; cook, stirring often, for 4 minutes. Add the eel, the bones and head of the sea bass, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups wine, and 9 cups water; partially cover pot, bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-high; cook, stirring occasionally and skimming the surface, until broth reduces to about 7 cups, about 1 hour. Strain broth, pressing on the bones to expel as much liquid as possible. Discard solids and set broth aside.

2 Heat remaining oil, garlic, and Aleppo pepper in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium heat; cook, stirring often, until garlic is soft, about 4 minutes. Add remaining wine and broth, along with potatoes, carrots, and zucchini; bring to a boil and cook until tender, about 15 minutes. Halve sea bass filets crosswise and add them to the broth; cook until filets are opaque, about 4 minutes. Season with salt and lemon juice. Ladle soup into bowls; serve hot.

KEFTEDES ME SALTSA DOMATA

(Meatballs in Tomato Sauce)

SERVES 4-6

Redolent of oregano and mint, these meatballs (pictured at left) are served in northern Greece as a meze with fried potatoes or steamed rice.

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. eel or monkfish, cleaned and cut into 4" pieces
- 2 1-lb. sea bass or red snapper, cleaned and fileted, bones and head reserved
- 2 cups white wine
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. Aleppo pepper or $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 3 Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1" pieces
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and cut into 1" pieces

- 1 tbsp. dried mint
- 5 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for frying
- 2 tbsp. dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. freshly ground nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 medium red onion, grated
- 1 large egg and 1 yolk, beaten
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 cup milk
- 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "-thick slices stale country

O'AHU

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

O'ahu's main city of Honolulu offers fun and relaxation in the sun, a bit of culture and history, and lots of delicious food. But as with any destination, venturing out of the main city can lead to memorable adventures and great local eats.

WINDWARD COAST

Head to O'ahu's windward side for the soft, white sands and clear waters of Kailua Beach and adjoining Lanikai Beach.

Start your beach day with coffee and muffins at Kalapawai Market, just at the turn to Kailua Beach Park. When midday hunger hits, walk across the road to the classic Buzz's Original Steakhouse where *kiawe* (mesquite) grilled steaks and an old-fashioned salad bar are just plain good—made better by the gracious hospitality and nostalgic old Hawai'i ambience.

Kailua town is full of good eats. Aloha Salads serves up wonderful concoctions, fresh and locally grown; the Aloha Passion, with apple, walnut, mango, bleu cheese, and passion-orange vinaigrette, is a must. Kalapawai Café's meals are loaded with fresh island produce, fish, and meats. Fish from the morning auction are brought in daily and served alongside O'ahu-grown greens. Island Snow is a must stop—even for the First Family—for velvety, fruit-flavored shave ice, a favorite island treat and the ideal way to cool off after a day in the sun.

On Thursdays, check out the Kailua Town Farmers' Market from 5 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. in the heart of town. Fresh fruits and vegetables, baked goods, and dinners on take-out plates are all homegrown and delicious. Just a half block away, settle in for a glass of wine at Formaggio Grill and nibble on an assortment of small plates like Paprika Grilled Ahi and Calamari Fritto Misto before heading back over the Pali Highway to Waikiki.

LEEWARD COAST

Head to Leeward O'ahu and learn a little history and culture at Hawai'i's Plantation Village in Waipahu. Docents take you through a village of quaint houses that were once home to immigrants who worked on the sugar plantations. A Portuguese *forno* (oven) for baking breads, field workers' lunch tins, cooking implements from the past, and other memorabilia are reminders of a time when sugar was king in Hawai'i.

It was sugar, after all, that brought so many ethnic groups to Hawai'i and created the islands' local melting pot cuisine. And where better to try some local grindz than at the Poke Stop and Tanioka's, Waipahu eateries where residents of this former plantation town go for island favorites. You'll want to try some poke, bite-size morsels of seasoned fish and seafood, at the Poke Stop. Among the 20-plus varieties available for takeout or dine-in are garlic edamame ahi and kimchi mussel. At Tanioka's, dig into the Hawaiian food plates and bentos. Mix and match local favorites like loco moco, kalua pork, and lomilomi salmon.

If it's a Tuesday, check out the Peoples Open Market at Waipahu District Park from 8:15 to 9:15 in the morning. This farmers' market features ethnic specialties that will pique the interest of curious foodies.

For more foodie inspiration
and favorite local eats, visit:
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Kailua Town Center

FORMAGGIO GRILL

305 Hahani Street
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HAWAI'I'S PLANTATION VILLAGE

94-695 Waipahu Street
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POKE STOP

94-050 Farrington Highway
808-676-8100

TANIOKA'S

94-903 Farrington Highway
808-671-3779

PEOPLE'S OPEN MARKET

Waipahu District Park
94-230 Paiwa Street

bread, crusts removed

- 1 lb. ground beef, pork, or lamb
- ½ cup flour, for dredging
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ tbsp. tomato paste
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 28-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes, drained and puréed
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley, for garnish

① In a medium bowl, combine mint, 2 tbsp. oil, 1 tbsp. oregano, ⅛ tsp. cinnamon, ⅛ tsp. nutmeg, cayenne, onions, and eggs; season with salt and pepper. Put milk and bread in a bowl; let soak 5 minutes. Drain bread; squeeze out milk. Mix bread, onion mixture, and meat. Divide mixture into 20 balls; flatten slightly into patties or roll into ovals. Dredge each meatball in flour. Pour enough oil into a 12" skillet to reach a depth of ½"; heat over medium-high heat. Working in 3 batches, cook meatballs until browned, 6–8 minutes. Transfer meatballs to paper towels. Discard oil; wipe out skillet.

② Heat remaining oil in skillet over medium heat. Add garlic; cook 1 minute. Stir in tomato paste and bay leaves; cook 2 minutes. Add remaining oregano, cinnamon, and nutmeg, along with the tomatoes and broth. Cook, stirring, until thickened, 15–20 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, and lemon juice. Nestle meatballs in sauce; cook until sauce coats meatballs, about 5 minutes. Garnish with parsley.

KOTOPOULO ME DENDROLIVANO

(Rosemary Chicken)

SERVES 2–4

Thessaloniki chef Aglaia Patronaki showed us how to make this delicious, herb-strewn, skillet-braised chicken dish (pictured on page 76).

- 4 whole skin-on chicken legs
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ cup flour, for dredging
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

- 1 cup white wine
- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- Juice of 1 lemon

Heat oven to 425°. Season chicken generously with salt and pepper. Put flour on a plate and dredge chicken in flour to coat, shaking off excess. Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook, turning once, until browned, about 10 minutes. Add wine, rosemary, and bay leaves. Return pan to heat and cook until wine reduces by half, about 2 minutes. Add 1½ cups water and bring to a boil. Cover skillet, transfer to oven, and cook until chicken is tender, about 45 minutes. Uncover and let chicken skin crisp, 5 minutes. Remove chicken from the oven; stir in lemon juice. Serve chicken with the pan sauce.

Pairing Note The 2008 Gerovassiliou Viognier (\$45), a modern Greek white wine, has a complex richness that marries perfectly with this classic dish. —David Rosengarten.

KOUNELI STIFADO

(Rabbit and Onion Stew)

SERVES 4

Sweetened with prunes and studded with pearl onions, this country-style rabbit stew (pictured on page 104) is a home-cooked specialty on Crete.

- 2 lbs. pearl onions, root ends trimmed
- 1 rabbit (about 3 lbs.), cut into 8 pieces
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 lb. medium tomatoes, roughly chopped
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 12 prunes
- 6 cloves
- 5 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed
- 3 dried bay leaves
- 2 small sprigs fresh rosemary
- 1 2" stick cinnamon

Flat-leaf parsley, for garnish

① Bring a 4-qt. pot of water to a boil. Add onions and cook for 1 minute. Using a slotted spoon, transfer onions to a large bowl of ice water and let sit for 5 minutes. Drain onions and, using a small knife, remove skins; set aside.

② Season the rabbit with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a 5-qt. Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Working in 3 batches, add the rabbit and cook, turning once, until browned, about 8 minutes. Transfer rabbit to a plate; set aside. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes, broth, tomato paste, prunes, cloves, garlic, bay leaves, rosemary, and cinnamon. Nestle the rabbit in the pot, cover, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cook until rabbit is very tender, about 45 minutes.

③ Transfer rabbit to a large platter. Set a medium strainer over a 1-qt. saucepan. Strain the cooking liquid, discarding bay leaves and rosemary. Transfer the onions and prunes to the platter. Simmer the strained sauce over medium-high heat until slightly thickened, about 8 minutes. Skim excess fat from surface, season sauce with salt and pepper, and spoon over rabbit. Serve stew garnished with parsley.

Pairing Note A red wine with a touch of sweetness works well with this entrée; I like the 2008 Agiorgitiko by Gaia (\$25) with its pure cherry tones. —D.R.

LAGANES

(Flat Breads with Two Toppings)

SERVES 8–10

Aglaia Kremezi cooks these flat breads on a hearthstone set over hot coals (a cast-iron skillet on the stove works well, too) and serves them with tomato sauce or sautéed zucchini and feta. The dish is pictured on page 108.

- 1½ tsp. active dry yeast
- 1½ cups flour, plus more for dusting

- 1 cup fine semolina
- ¾ cup whole wheat flour
- ½ cup barley flour
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- ½ tsp. ground caraway seeds
- ¼ tsp. ground mahlepi (optional; see page 119)
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for brushing
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- ¾ cup marsala wine or port
- 1 tbsp. honey
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. crushed red chile flakes or ½ tsp. Aleppo pepper, plus more
- 1 28-oz. can whole peeled tomatoes, undrained and crushed by hand
- 2 medium zucchini, julienned
- 14 oz. feta, crumbled

① In a large bowl, stir together yeast and 1¾ cups water heated to 115°; let sit until foamy, about 10 minutes. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, semolina, whole wheat and barley flours, salt, coriander, caraway, mahlepi, and pepper until combined. Add yeast mixture and stir to form a dough. Transfer dough to a floured work surface and knead until smooth, about 5 minutes. Shape dough into a ball and place in a lightly oiled bowl; cover bowl with plastic wrap and let sit until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

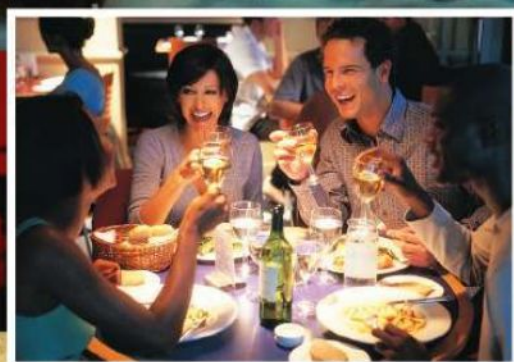
② Meanwhile, make the tomato sauce: Heat 6 tbsp. oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onions; cook until soft, about 10 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook, stirring, until glossy, about 2 minutes. Add marsala, honey, cinnamon, chile flakes, and tomatoes; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cook, partially covered and stirring occasionally, until sauce thickens, about 1 hour. Season sauce with salt and set aside.

③ Heat remaining oil in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Add zucchini and

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season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring, until tender, about 8 minutes; set aside.

4 Uncover dough, divide into 16 portions; roll each into a ball. Transfer dough balls to a floured baking sheet and cover with a damp tea towel; let rest for 30 minutes. Working with one dough ball at a time, transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface and use a rolling pin to roll dough into an 8" disk about $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick; transfer the disk to a parchment paper-lined, floured baking sheet, sprinkle with more flour, and repeat with remaining dough, placing a piece of parchment paper between each rolled disk. Cover disks with plastic wrap until ready to use.

5 Heat a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Working with one dough disk at a time, brush with olive oil and place in skillet. Cook, flipping once, until puffed and golden brown, 3–4 minutes. Spoon tomato sauce or zucchini over top and sprinkle with feta and more chile flakes.

LAVRAKI STIN SCHARA

(Grilled Sea Bass Wrapped in Fig Leaves)

SERVES 4

In this preparation (pictured on page 95), fig leaves perfume and protect the flesh of the fish. Serve with lemon-olive oil sauce (see page 115).

- 4 12–16-oz. whole branzino or black sea bass, cleaned
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 4–8 large fig leaves (see page 119)
- 4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for oiling
- Lemon and olive oil sauce (see page 115)

Build a medium fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to medium. Season fish inside and out with salt. Wrap each fish with a fig leaf or two so that leaf or leaves fully wrap around fish, leaving head and tail exposed. Brush each fish with 1 tbsp. oil. Transfer fish to a well-oiled grill and cook, turning once with a metal spatula, until fish are cooked through and fig leaves are charred and

crispy, 10–15 minutes. Transfer fish to a platter and spoon sauce over top.

MACARONIA ME LOUKANIK A KE TIRI

(Pasta with Sausage and Cheese)

SERVES 2–4

In this dish from Epirus (pictured on page 108), pork sausage, blue cheese, and fresh oregano are a gorgeous counterpoint to pasta.

- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 oz. semi-cured Greek pork sausages (see page 119) or sweet Italian sausages, cut into



Clockwise from top left: rabbit and onion stew; wild greens with fried eggs; marinated sardines; fish and vegetable soup.

- 1" pieces
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 8 oz. pasta, preferably garganelli or penne
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white wine
- $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. blue cheese, crumbled
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup loosely packed fresh oregano leaves
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese, for garnish
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add sausages and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 7 minutes. Meanwhile, bring a 4-qt. pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook until al dente, about 9 minutes. Strain pasta, reserving $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pasta cooking liquid; set aside. Add wine to sausages and cook until reduced by one quarter, about 2 minutes. Add the blue cheese, cream, and oregano and cook until the mixture is thick and the cheese has melted, about 2 minutes. Stir in reserved pasta and season with salt. (If sauce seems too thick, stir in some of the reserved



pasta cooking liquid.) Transfer pasta to a small platter; garnish with grated cheese and season with black pepper.

PAPOUTSAKIA

(Stuffed Eggplant)

SERVES 6

The recipe for this Peloponnese-style eggplant dish (pictured on page 91) is from Susanna Hoffman's *The Olive and the Caper* (Workman, 2004).

- 6 small eggplants (about $\frac{3}{4}$ or

1 lb. each)

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 7 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 medium yellow onion, minced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. ground beef, pork, or lamb
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 cups crushed tomatoes
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cups dry red wine
- 2 tbsp. dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. ground cloves
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour
- 2 cups milk
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 egg yolks
- Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg, to taste

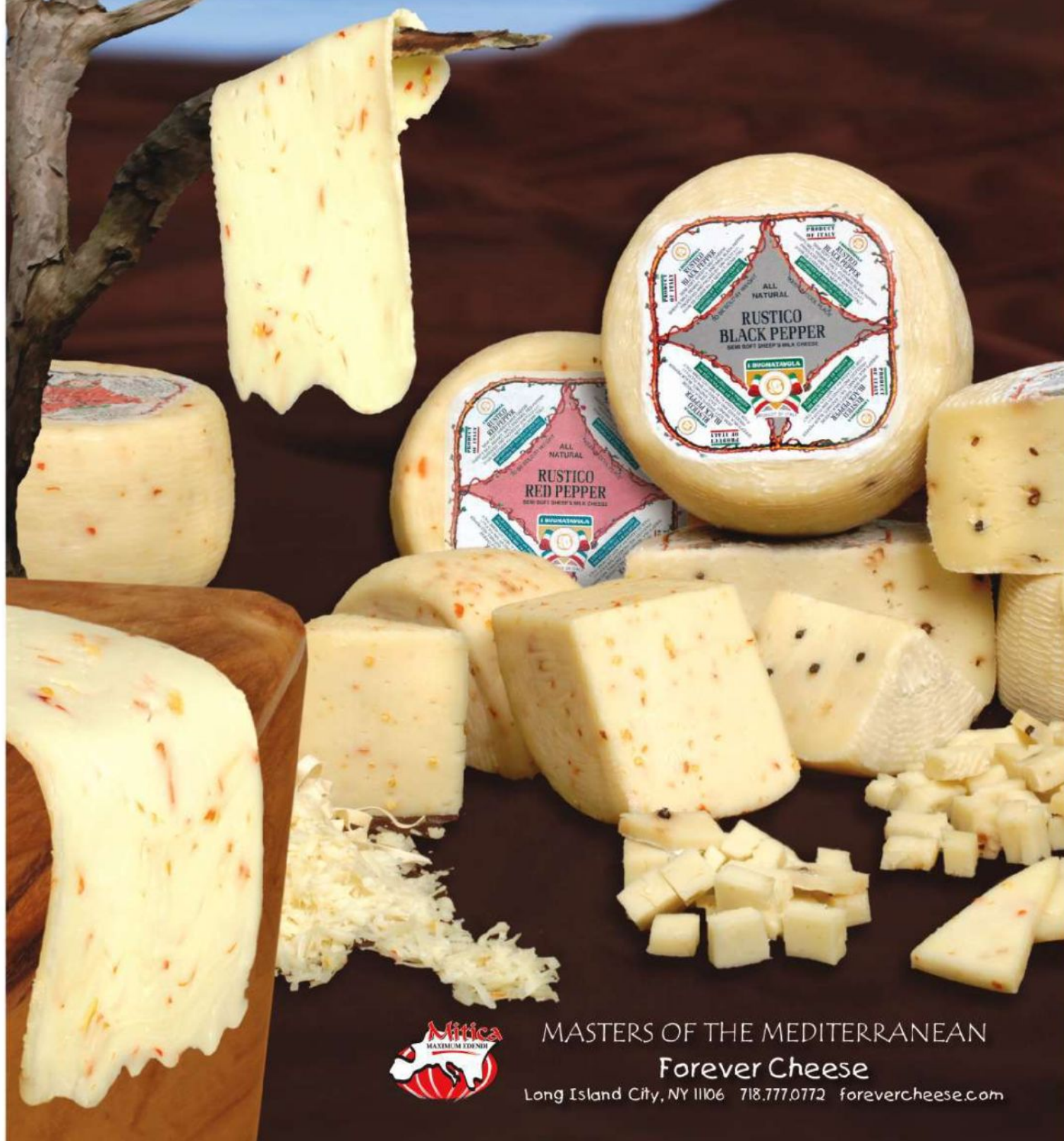
1 Cut each eggplant in half lengthwise and, using a spoon, scoop out most of the flesh, leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ "-thick eggplant shell; coarsely chop scooped-out flesh and set aside. Working in 2 batches, heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add eggplant shells and cook, turning once, until browned and just wilted, about 5 minutes. Transfer eggplant shells to paper towels; set aside.

2 Discard oil and wipe out skillet. Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil in skillet over medium-high heat; add garlic and onions and cook, stirring often, until soft, about 5 minutes. Add meat, breaking it into small pieces with a wooden spoon, and season with salt and pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in reserved eggplant flesh, tomatoes, wine, oregano, cinnamon, and cloves; season with salt and pepper and bring to a simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until sauce has thickened, about 45 minutes. Remove pan from heat and set meat sauce aside.

3 Heat butter in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add flour and cook, whisking constantly, until smooth and slightly toasted, 1–2 minutes. Add milk; cook, whisking often, until sauce coats the back of a spoon, 8–10 minutes.

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Remove from heat, add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cheese and egg yolks; season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Stir béchamel until smooth; set aside.

④ Heat oven to 350°. Put eggplant shells cut side up in a rimmed baking sheet lined with aluminum foil. Sprinkle shells with half the remaining cheese and fill each with reserved meat sauce. Spoon béchamel over top and sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake until eggplants are tender, about 20 minutes. Increase heat to broil and cook until béchamel is golden brown and bubbly, about 5 minutes more.

Pairing Note An excellent choice for this hearty and rustic dish is the 2006 Domaine Mercouri Estate Red (\$22), made from refosco grapes. —D.R.

PASTITSIO

(Greek Lasagne)

SERVES 10-12

This creamy casserole of pasta and meat (pictured on page 72) is enjoyed throughout Greece.

FOR THE MEAT SAUCE:

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 green bell peppers, cored, seeded, and minced
- 2 medium yellow onions, minced
- 1 lb. ground beef, veal, or pork
- 3 oz. dry-cured chorizo, minced
- 2 cups canned crushed tomatoes
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup red wine
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 2 fresh or dried bay leaves
- 1 2" cinnamon stick
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Freshly grated nutmeg, to taste

FOR THE BÉCHAMEL AND PASTA:

- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 cup flour
- 4 cups milk
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 eggs, separated
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Freshly grated nutmeg, to taste
- 1 lb. No. 2 Greek macaroni (see page 119), bucatini, or elbow

macaroni

2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

① Make the meat sauce: Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add peppers and onions and cook, stirring often, until soft, 8-10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer onion mixture to a plate and set aside. Add ground meat and chorizo to skillet and cook, breaking meat up into tiny pieces, until browned, 6-8 minutes. Add reserved onion mixture, along with tomatoes, wine, chile flakes, bay leaves, and cinnamon and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring often, until sauce thickens, about 15 minutes. Remove sauce from heat, discard bay leaves and cinnamon, and season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg; let cool.

② Make the béchamel: Heat butter in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add flour and cook, whisking constantly, until smooth and slightly toasted, 1-2 minutes. Add milk; cook, whisking often, until sauce coats the back of a spoon, 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat, add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cheese and egg yolks; season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Stir until smooth; set aside.

③ Heat oven to 350°. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil; add pasta and cook halfway through, about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, whisk egg whites in a large bowl until frothy. Stir in remaining cheese; drain pasta in a colander and then toss with egg white-cheese mixture to coat evenly. Set aside.

④ Grease a deep 9" x 13" baking dish with olive oil. Place half the pasta mixture on bottom of dish and cover evenly with meat sauce. Top with remaining pasta mixture. Pour béchamel over pasta, spreading it evenly with a rubber spatula. Bake until the top is golden brown, about 1 hour. Transfer to wire rack; cool 20 minutes before serving.

Pairing Note Look for a rich, zesty red like the 2007 Miliarakis Estate from Minos (\$26), a kotsifali-mandilari blend with spice and heft. —D.R.

SOUVLAKI HIRINO

(Pork Kebabs)

SERVES 2-4

Oregano and garlic give these grilled pork kebabs (pictured on page 74) their signature flavor.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup red wine
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. dried mint
- 1 tbsp. dried oregano
- 8 cloves garlic, smashed and minced into a paste
- 1 bay leaf, finely crumbled
- 1 lb. trimmed pork shoulder, cut into $1\frac{1}{4}$ " cubes
- 4 9" wooden skewers
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Lemon wedges, for serving

① In a medium bowl, whisk together oil, wine, lemon juice, mint, oregano, garlic, and bay leaf; add pork and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour or overnight. Meanwhile, soak skewers in water.

② Build a medium-hot fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to medium-high. (Alternatively, arrange an oven rack 4" below the broiler element and set oven to broil.) Thread about 4 pieces of pork onto each skewer so that pork pieces just touch each other. Season with salt and pepper and transfer to the grill (or, covering exposed ends of skewers with foil, put skewers on a rack set over a foil-lined baking sheet). Cook, turning often, until cooked through and slightly charred, about 10 minutes. Serve with lemon wedges.

SIDE DISHES

ALEVROPITA

(Feta Tart)

SERVES 8-10

Made with a simple egg batter, this feta-studded tart (pictured on page 85) hails from the region of Epirus.

- 6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp. vodka

- 1 egg
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups flour, sifted
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. baking powder
- 10 oz. feta, crumbled
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened

Heat oven to 500°. Put an 18" x 13" x 1" rimmed baking sheet into oven for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, whisk together 2 tbsp. oil, vodka, egg, and 1 cup water in a bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk flour, salt, and baking powder. Pour wet mixture over dry mixture and whisk until smooth. Brush remaining oil over bottom of hot pan and add batter, smoothing batter with a rubber spatula to coat the bottom evenly, if necessary. Distribute cheese evenly over batter, and dot with butter. Bake, rotating baking sheet halfway through, until golden brown and crunchy, about 20 minutes. Let cool slightly before slicing and serving.

BRIAM

(Roasted Vegetables)

SERVES 4

Peloponnese home cook Maria Xerakia gave us this recipe for roasted summer vegetables (pictured on page 88), which pairs well with roasted lamb.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 medium Yukon Gold potatoes, cut crosswise into $\frac{1}{4}$ " slices
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup canned crushed tomatoes
- 4 sprigs fresh oregano
- 4 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 small eggplants, cut crosswise into $\frac{1}{2}$ " pieces
- 2 small zucchini, cut crosswise into $\frac{1}{2}$ " pieces
- 1 medium white onion, cut into eighths

Heat oven to 450°. Toss together $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil and potatoes in a bowl; season with salt and pepper. Transfer potatoes to 4-qt. roasting pan. Bake, tossing occasionally, for 15 minutes. In a large bowl, combine remaining oil, tomatoes, oregano, garlic, eggplant, zucchini, and onions; season with salt

Québec

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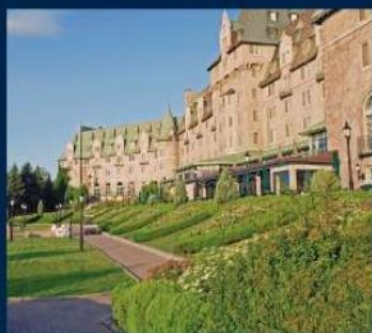
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and pepper. Add vegetables to pan and bake, tossing occasionally, until golden brown, about 50 minutes.

DOLMADES

(Stuffed Grape Leaves)

MAKES ABOUT 30

This meze of stuffed grape leaves (pictured on page 100) is served with a cucumber-yogurt sauce.

- 1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded, and grated
- ½ tsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 5 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tbsp. minced fennel
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ½ medium red onion, minced
- ½ cup basmati rice
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ cup minced fresh dill
- ¼ cup minced fresh parsley
- ¾ tsp. dried mint
- 34 grape leaves in brine, drained (see page 119)
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice

1 Put cucumber in a strainer and sprinkle with ½ tsp. salt; toss; let sit 30 minutes. Squeeze out liquid; mix with yogurt in a bowl. Season sauce with salt and pepper; chill.

2 Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add fennel, garlic, and onions; cook until soft, 3–4 minutes. Add rice; toast for 3 minutes. Add cumin and 1½ cups water; season with salt and pepper. Boil; reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until rice has absorbed water, 12–15 minutes. Stir in 1 tbsp. oil along with dill, parsley, and mint. Let cool slightly.

3 Coat bottom of a 3-qt. saucepan with remaining oil and 3 tbsp. water; cover with 4 grape leaves. Set remaining grape leaves on a work surface, vein side up. Working with one leaf at a time, flatten leaf and place about 1½ tsp. rice mixture in center. Fold bottom of leaf over filling, fold in sides, and roll into tight cylinder. Transfer, seam

side down, to pot. Repeat. Add lemon juice and ¾ cup water to pot. Cover grape leaves with a small plate to keep submerged; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until rice filling is tender, 15–20 minutes. Serve hot or cold with the yogurt sauce.

GARIDES SAGANAKI

(Shrimp with Tomatoes and Feta)

SERVES 4

The term *saganaki* refers to the skillet in which Greeks cook ingredients with cheese. In this appetizer (pictured below), shrimp is topped with crumbled feta and broiled.



Clockwise from top left: pasta with sausage and cheese; shrimp with tomato and feta; beets with potato-garlic spread; flat breads with two toppings.

- 4 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 scallions, minced
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- ½ cup white wine
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- ½ tsp. sugar
- ¼ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 4 medium tomatoes, grated
- 3 tbsp. chopped fresh mint
- 16 large shrimp (about ¾ lb.), peeled and deveined
- Kosher salt and freshly ground

black pepper, to taste

4 oz. feta

1 lemon, halved

1 tbsp. minced fresh parsley

Arrange a rack 4" from heating element; heat oven to broil. Heat oil in a 10" skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and scallions; cook, until soft, 3–4 minutes. Stir in tomato paste; cook for 2 minutes. Add wine; cook until reduced by half, 3–4 minutes. Add oregano, sugar, chile flakes, and tomatoes; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring often, until slightly thickened, 12 minutes. Stir in mint and



- 2 tbsp. roughly chopped fresh parsley, plus more for garnish
- 2 medium vine-ripened tomatoes, cut into 1½" pieces
- 1 small cucumber, peeled, halved lengthwise, and sliced crosswise into ¼" pieces
- ½ medium white onion, thinly sliced
- 3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- ⅛ tsp. dried oregano, plus more
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 6 oz. feta, cut into thick slabs
- 8 kalamata olives

Combine parsley, tomatoes, cucumbers, and onions in a bowl. In a small bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, and oregano; season with salt and pepper and pour over cucumber mixture. Toss. Transfer salad to a serving bowl and top with feta and olives. Garnish with more oregano; season with pepper.

KOLOKITHOKEFTEDES

(Zucchini Fritters)

SERVES 4

Based on a recipe from author Nancy Harmon Jenkins, this Cretan meze dish (pictured on page 67) can be served hot or at room temperature.

- 1 lb. zucchini, grated
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ cup minced flat-leaf parsley
- ½ cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese
- ½ cup dried bread crumbs
- 1 medium yellow onion, grated
- 1 egg, beaten
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Pinch of cayenne, to taste
- Olive oil or canola oil, for frying

1 Mix zucchini and salt in a strainer; set a weighted plate on top; let drain for 30 minutes. Transfer zucchini to a tea towel; squeeze out liquid. Mix zucchini, parsley, cheese, bread crumbs, onions, and egg in a bowl. Season with pepper and cayenne; divide mixture into 12 balls. Press balls into ¾"-thick patties.

HORIATIKI

(Greek Salad)

SERVES 2

This refreshing salad (pictured on page 59) takes on various guises in Greece depending on what vegetables are in season, but it almost always features feta and a dusting of dried oregano.



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2 Pour oil into a 4-qt. pot to a depth of 2"; heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 315°. Working in 2 batches, fry patties until browned and crisp, 5–6 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer fritters to paper towels.

MELINTZANOSALATA

(Eggplant and Parsley Dip)

SERVES 8–10

Chiles lend heat to this smoky dip from Kea (pictured on page 100), made by Aglaia Kremezi.

- 2 lbs. eggplant (about 2 large eggplants)
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 green bell pepper, cored and roughly chopped
- 1 jalapeño, stemmed, seeded, and roughly chopped
- 1 cup flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Toasted pita, for serving

1 Build a hot fire in a charcoal grill or heat a gas grill to high. Grill eggplants, turning, until charred and soft, 18–20 minutes. Let cool. Peel eggplants; scoop out seeds. Chop eggplants; drain in strainer for 30 minutes.

2 Heat ¼ cup oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add peppers; cook for 10 minutes. Add jalapeños and continue cooking until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Transfer to bowl of food processor along with reserved eggplant, remaining oil, parsley, vinegar, and garlic. Process until slightly chunky. Season with salt and pepper. Chill to meld flavors. Serve with pita.

PIPERIES GEMISTES ME FETA

(Peppers Stuffed with Feta)

SERVES 4–6

This meze (pictured on page 79) is made in Macedonia with sweet Florina peppers, though Fresno or Anaheim chiles (the former being hotter than the latter) can be substituted.

- 10 3"–4" Fresno chiles or six 4"–5" Anaheim chiles
- 9 oz. feta, crumbled
- 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp. Greek yogurt
- 1 tbsp. minced fresh parsley
- ½ tsp. lemon zest
- ¼ tsp. dried oregano
- 2 egg yolks
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

1 Arrange a rack 6" from the broiler element and set oven to broil. Put peppers on a baking sheet and broil, turning once, until just soft, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a rack; let cool.

2 In a large bowl, use a hand mixer to whip feta, oil, yogurt, parsley, zest, oregano, and egg yolks; season with salt and pepper. Make a lengthwise cut from the stem to the tip of each pepper; scoop out seeds and ribs. Stuff each pepper with some of the feta filling; transfer to an aluminum foil-lined baking sheet; chill for 30 minutes. Sprinkle peppers with grated cheese; broil peppers until cheese is golden brown and bubbly, about 6 minutes. Transfer peppers to a platter and serve hot.

PANTZARIA ME SKORDALIA

(Roasted Beets with Garlic-Potato Spread)

SERVES 4–6

This classic taverna dish (pictured on page 108) pairs sweet roasted beets with a garlicky skordalia made with potatoes and walnuts.

- 4 medium red beets (about 1½ lbs.), trimmed and cleaned
- 10 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup finely ground toasted walnuts
- 1 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 6 cloves garlic, smashed and minced into a paste
- 2 medium russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1" squares and boiled until tender

1 Heat oven to 425°. Put beets in an

8" x 8" baking dish and drizzle with 2 tbsp. oil. Season with salt and pepper and pour in 1 cup water. Cover pan tightly with foil and crimp edges to form a seal. Bake beets until a knife inserted into beet slides easily into the center, about 1 hour. Transfer pan to a rack, carefully uncover, and let cool for 30 minutes. Peel beets and cut into 1"–2" pieces; set aside.

2 Put walnuts, vinegar, garlic, and potatoes into a medium bowl and mash potatoes until smooth. Vigorously stir in remaining oil and season with salt and pepper. Transfer beets to plates and serve with some of the skordalia spread on the side.

SARDELES LADOLEMONO

(Marinated Sardines)

SERVES 2–4

For this appetizer from Kea (pictured on page 104), fresh sardines are lightly pickled in a tart marinade.

- 12 2"–3" sardines or anchovies, cleaned
- 12 tbsp. white wine vinegar
- Kosher salt, to taste
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ⅓ cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

1 Working with one sardine at a time, use a knife to remove the head. Without piercing the fish all the way through, use the tip of the knife to loosen the spine and remove the bones from the flesh. Rinse the cavity with 1 tbsp. of vinegar and transfer the deboned sardine to a small bowl. Lightly season the cavity with salt. Repeat with remaining fish and vinegar.

2 Drain sardines and arrange them in an 8" x 8" baking dish. In a small bowl, whisk together the oil, lemon juice, parsley, and garlic and pour marinade over the sardines, massaging some of the marinade into the cavity of each fish. Cover dish with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight, turning fish occasionally. To serve, transfer fish to small plates and serve with bread.

DESSERT

PORTOKALOPITA

(Orange Cake)

SERVES 12

Chopped phyllo dough gives this orange-scented custard cake from Crete (pictured on page 68) its layered texture.

- 3 ⅛"-thick orange slices
- 1⅔ cups fresh orange juice
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1 2" stick cinnamon
- 14 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for greasing
- Flour, for pan
- 4 eggs
- ¾ cup Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup orange zest
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ cup fine semolina
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- 12 oz. country-style phyllo sheets, cut in ½" pieces (see page 119)

1 Heat oven to 325°. Put orange slices in bottom of an 8" x 8" baking dish; pour 1 cup orange juice over top. Cover baking dish with foil. Bake until oranges are very soft, 40–45 minutes. Transfer to a rack to cool.

2 Meanwhile, bring ¾ cup sugar, cinnamon, and 1½ cups water to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan. Cook for 5 minutes; remove from heat. Pour syrup over orange slices. Let cool completely.

3 Grease a 9" x 13" baking dish and dust with flour; set aside. Combine remaining sugar and eggs in a bowl; beat with a hand mixer until pale and thick. Whisk in remaining orange juice, oil, yogurt, zest, and vanilla. In a separate bowl, whisk together semolina and baking powder, whisk into egg mixture, then stir in phyllo. Pour mixture into prepared dish; bake until lightly browned, 35–40 minutes. Pour syrup evenly over cake; let cool. Cut cake into 12 squares and cut orange slices into quarters; top each square with an orange quarter.

The SAVEUR Chef Series

GAVIN KAYSEN has come a long way from Bloomington, MN. He started out assembling tuna sandwiches at Subway, but for the past few years, the NECI grad and *Iron Chef* champion has been wowing patrons of Café Boulud & Bar Pleiades in New York City with ever-changing arrays of traditional French, seasonal, local, and world cuisine. By combining inspired form with flavors and textures, Chef Kaysen's dishes are guaranteed to please the shrewdest palate—including that of his one-year-old son.



ERIC LAIGNEL

Where did your love of food develop? Did you grow up surrounded by delicious meals?

No, in Minnesota where I grew up, green beans were frozen and beets came from a can. I didn't have fresh beets until I was nineteen. Food wasn't emphasized in our house, but my grandmother liked to cook and I learned a lot from her. We'd be in the kitchen together at the end of the day when my family would start to come home. Some would help out and then we'd all sit and eat. So I associated food with bringing the family together.

How did you get your start in the kitchen?

I started in a Subway, believe it or not, making sandwiches when I was fifteen. A gentleman named George Serra opened an Italian restaurant next door and gave me a dollar more an hour, which at fifteen was all it took. George was an amazing mentor. He taught me about food as a passion, and about hospitality: getting to know each customer, knowing their names, what they like to eat. He also taught me basic cooking techniques and he really emphasized the look—we'd review art magazines, sculptures, and paintings. George taught me the importance of the presentation of food.

After a day at the restaurant, what's your favorite meal to cook at home?

If I've worked all day, I'd rather just open a nice bottle of wine and eat some cheese and freshly baked bread. On days off, I love to cook fish. We were in Maryland recently and I saw this guy pulling softshell crabs out of the water. I immediately bought ten and went straight home to grill them. I like anything that's very fresh, very clean—and seasonal is important.

As summer winds down, what early fall ingredients are you really looking forward to?

Every fall what excites me the most is pumpkin. When I was a kid, my mom used to make the best pumpkin seeds, fried in brown butter with salt and sage. Now I use them to garnish soups and salads for a little crunch. So I love pumpkin as well as squash, especially roasted squash with fish.

What are you most excited to teach your son in the kitchen?

One thing that's important to me is that he understand where food comes from. I'm excited to teach him the value of food: what makes a piece of roasted squash taste so wonderful, why corn is best at peak season, things like that. And it's fun to see his palate develop: you give your child his first piece of fresh squash; he doesn't know what it is, or what it's supposed to taste like, so his first reaction is: it's disgusting—but then he takes another bite, and all of a sudden he loves it.

SEARED WILD STRIPED BASS WITH KABOCHA SQUASH PURÉE

SERVES 6

FOR THE FISH:

- 6 6-oz. portions wild striped bass, deboned, skin on
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1 sprig thyme
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Salt and pepper

KABOCHA SQUASH PURÉE

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 shallot, sliced
- 2 tbsp. muscovado sugar
- 1 whole Kabocha squash peeled, seeded, and diced (about 2 pounds flesh)
- 1 1/2" piece of vanilla bean, seeds scraped
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- Spice sachet (1/2 tsp. allspice, 1/2 cinnamon stick, 1 clove, 1/2 tsp. white peppercorn, 2 sprigs thyme, 1/2 garlic clove, 1 bay leaf, and 1 sprig sage, wrapped in cheesecloth and tied with butcher's twine)
- Cider vinegar to taste
- Salt and pepper

FOR THE FISH:

To prepare, season the fish on all sides with salt and pepper. Heat a thin layer of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat and add fish, skin side down. Sear until the skin is golden and crispy. Add butter, thyme, and garlic, flip the fish, and reduce heat to medium-low. Cook, basting, until done.

FOR THE SQUASH PURÉE:

In a large saucepot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add shallot and cook, stirring until tender. Add the sugar, squash, vanilla, and spice sachet. Cover and lightly simmer until squash is fork-tender. Remove and discard sachet and vanilla bean. Transfer squash to a blender and purée with enough cream to make a thick purée (you may need to do this in batches). Season to taste with cider vinegar, salt, and pepper. Reserve warm until ready to serve.

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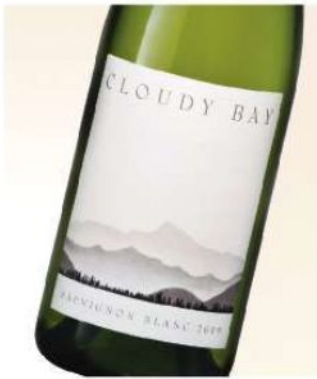


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Monocacy Ash: Buttery, lightly aged goat's milk cheese (Cherry Glen Farm, Maryland)

Charolais Affiné: Aged goat's milk cheese with a creamy, speckled exterior (Burgundy)

Fleur du Maquis: Firm sheep's milk cheese, aged and flavored with herbs (Corsica)

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Discoveries and Techniques from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman

Sour Power

WHILE TESTING the recipes for this issue (see “Glories of Greece,” page 59), we asked Michael Psilakis, the chef at Kefi, one of New York City’s best Greek restaurants, to show us how to make a few of his favorite dishes. When he arrived at the SAVEUR test kitchen, the first thing he did was whip up a smooth *lادوليمونو* (right), Greece’s version of a lemon sauce. The most striking thing about it was how much lemon juice he used—nearly a third of the sauce’s volume. This was a supercharged vinaigrette-like sauce, with a bracing tartness. It’s a natural partner for grilled seafood dishes, but Psilakis insisted that it’s also terrific for everything from basting roasted meats to livening up stews. “Lادوليمونو is the great equalizer,” he said. “It’s our secret ingredient.” —Karen Shimizu

LADOLEMONO

(Lemon and Olive Oil Sauce)

MAKES $\frac{3}{4}$ CUP

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp. dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Whisk together lemon juice, mustard, and oregano in a small bowl. While whisking, slowly pour in oil and season with salt and pepper. Whisk before serving, as sauce will separate.



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Our board members travel every inch of the globe to bring you the best in culinary destinations. Here, we highlight some of their most recent trips:



JEAN BUCK has returned with her group from Provence, where the cuisine included a marriage of fresh veggies and abundant seafood, creating dishes like ratatouille and bouillabaisse.



At Dublin's famous Thornton's Restaurant, **CAROL CORNELL** partook in a master class with chef Kevin Thornton. Together, she and the chef created a Michelin star dinner—fabulous and fun!



LESLIE FAMBRINI recently returned from India. She points out that her worldwide luxury cruise destinations stimulated both the culinary and visual senses.



On a recent trip, **MOLLIE FITZGERALD** enjoyed tea on the edge of the south Moroccan Desert. She stayed at Dar Ahlam, a stunning traditional Casbah in the heart of the Skoura Palm Grove and learned all there is to know about tagines.



JEAN CARTIER SAULEAU co-hosted a cruise along the western coast of Europe on Silversea Prince Albert II. She then went on to Paris as a guest of chef Jean-Pierre Vigato at Apicius, and enjoyed a hard-hat visit to the new Shangri-La Hotel.

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Phyllo Finds

The thin, finely layered pastry dough known as phyllo is essential to Greek cooking, used to make all sorts of savory pies, casseroles, and desserts. You can make your own from scratch (see the recipe on page 80), but there are many good-quality premade phyllo doughs available. Store-bought versions come frozen in a number of styles and thicknesses—sometimes indicated by a number grade—each suited to a different kind of preparation. Below, a quick guide. (See page 119 for sources.) —Ben Mims

Pastry phyllo (a and b) is as light and thin as cellophane; while tricky to handle, it creates ultra-crisp, delicate layers for baklava (we recommend Krinos brand). **No. 4 phyllo** (c and d) is slightly thicker and holds up to custard fillings in pastries like *bougatsa* (try Athens brand). **No. 5 phyllo** (e) is heftier still, and a great all-purpose dough; we use it for making tart shells and mini-phyllo cups for hors d'oeuvres and small desserts (Kontos brand is reliably good). **No. 7 phyllo** (f and g) is our choice for creating sturdy triangular and square pies like individual spanakopita and *tyropita* (look for Apollo brand). Finally, there's **country-style phyllo** (h and i), the thickest of the bunch; it's perfect for hearty, rustic pies like the feta-and-greens-filled *hortopita* shown on page 80 (Zagorisis brand is the best).

Marzipan Carrots



❶ To make the marzipan carrots for the classic carrot cake described on page 56, take a quarter-size piece of store-bought marzipan paste (or almond paste) tinted with a few drops of orange food coloring and shape it into a cylinder that's tapered to a point at one end.



❷ Roll a pea-size amount of marzipan paste tinted with green food coloring between your fingers to form a thin cylinder. Lay that cylinder across the blunt end of the orange cone; use a toothpick to press center of cylinder into top of cone, creating two "leaves."



❸ Set marzipan carrot aside for 10 minutes to allow its exterior to dry slightly. Then, using a small paring knife, score the surface of the carrot in staggered circular patterns to create natural-looking "wrinkles"; repeat to make 11 more carrots. —B.M.

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THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered ingredients and information too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY BEN MIMS

Fare

To make the mango–chile *paletas* (see page 22), use **mango juice or nectar**, preferably Looza brand, available from eFoodDepot.com (\$4.64 for a 1-liter bottle; 866/256-9210; www.efooddepot.com) and **ice-pop molds** from CentralChef.com (\$16.99 for ten 3-oz. molds; 813/254-6112; www.centralchef.com). For information on visiting Sudan, including **Khandahar**, go to www.sudan-tourism.gov.sd/en. To learn more about the **Big Green Egg**, go to www.biggreeneegg.com. Buy **pickled hops**, when in season, from Puterbaugh Farms (prices vary; 888/972-3616; www.hopsdirect.com). The **2006 Massaya Gold Reserve** and other Massaya wines are available from Wine Library (\$26 for a 750-milliliter bottle; 888/980-9463; www.winelibrary.com).

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Ingredient

To make the eggs in aspic (see page 40), use **oval aspic molds**, available from JB Prince (\$4.60 each; 800/473-0577; www.jbprince.com). To make the oysters in gelée (see page 42), use **green shiso leaves**, available from Sid Wainer & Son (\$24.95 for a 100-leaf package; 888/743-9246; www.sidwainer.com) and **ponzu sauce**, available from iHerb.com (\$7.95 for a 6.75-ounce bottle; 866/328-1171; www.iherb.com).

Greece

To prepare the roasted lamb with rosemary (see page 100), use **Aleppo pepper**, available from the Spice House (\$4.28 for a 2-ounce jar; 847/328-3711; www.thespicehouse.com). To make the flat breads with two toppings (see page 102), use **ground mahlepi** from ParthenonFoods.com (\$3.99 for a 1-ounce jar; 877/301-5522; www.parthenonfoods.com), which also carries Misko brand **No. 2 macaroni pasta** (\$1.99 for a 500-gram bag) to make the Greek lasagne (see page 106). To prepare the grilled sea bass wrapped in fig leaves (see page 104), use **fresh fig leaves** from Passion Fruit Farms (\$15 for 20 leaves; 209/725-3447; www.figlady.com). To make the pasta with sausage and cheese (see page 104), use **semi-cured Greek pork sausages** from ParthenonFoods.com (\$5.99 for 1 pound; look for “Dangles loukaniko”; see above). To make the stuffed grape leaves (see page 108), use **jarred grape leaves** from MexGrocer.com (\$5.50 for a 16-ounce jar; 877/463-9476; www.mexgrocer.com). To prepare the orange cake (see page 110), use our favorite phyllo (see page 116): Zagorisio **country-style phyllo** from Titan Foods (\$4.49 for a 750-gram box; 718/626-7771; www.titanfood.com), which also carries **dried Greek oregano** (\$3.99 for an 80-gram jar).

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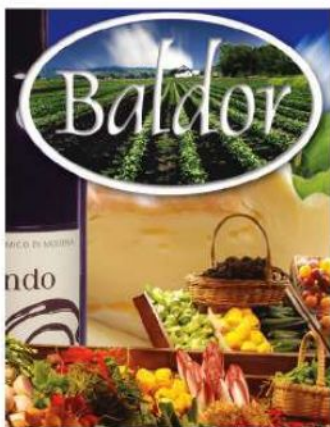
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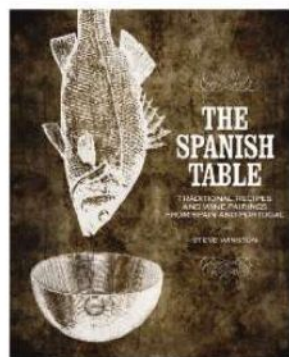
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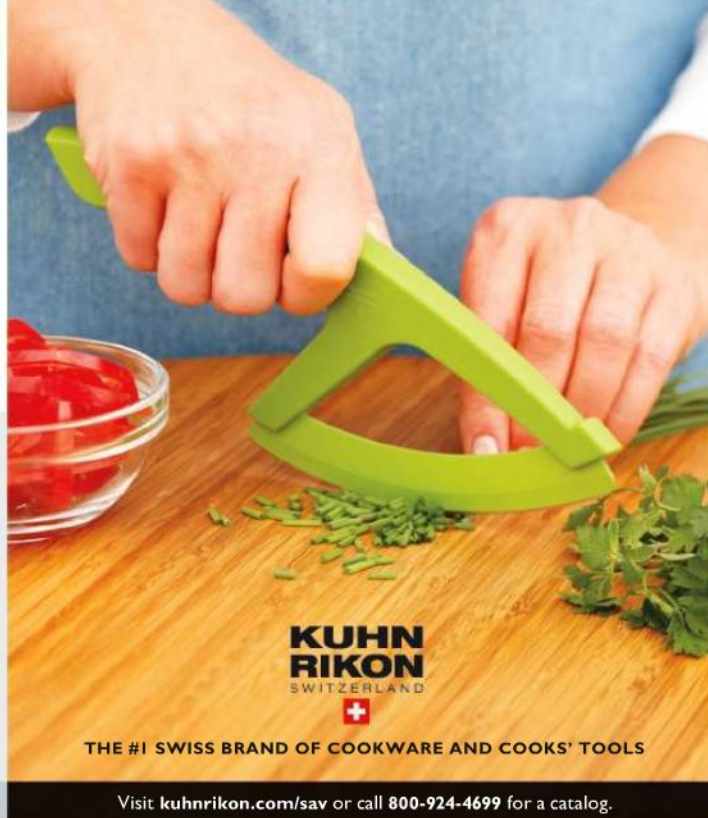
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TIME August 10, 1998

PLACE Monemvasia, Greece

A waterfront taverna in the Peloponnese is as good a spot as any to ponder the eternal.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NIKOS ECONOMOPOULOS/MAGNUM PHOTOS



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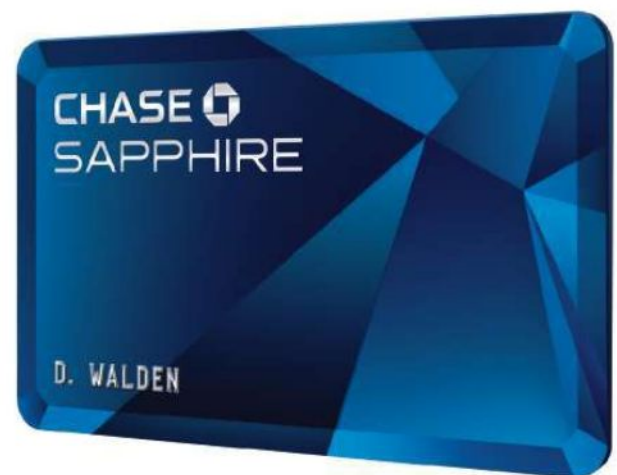
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